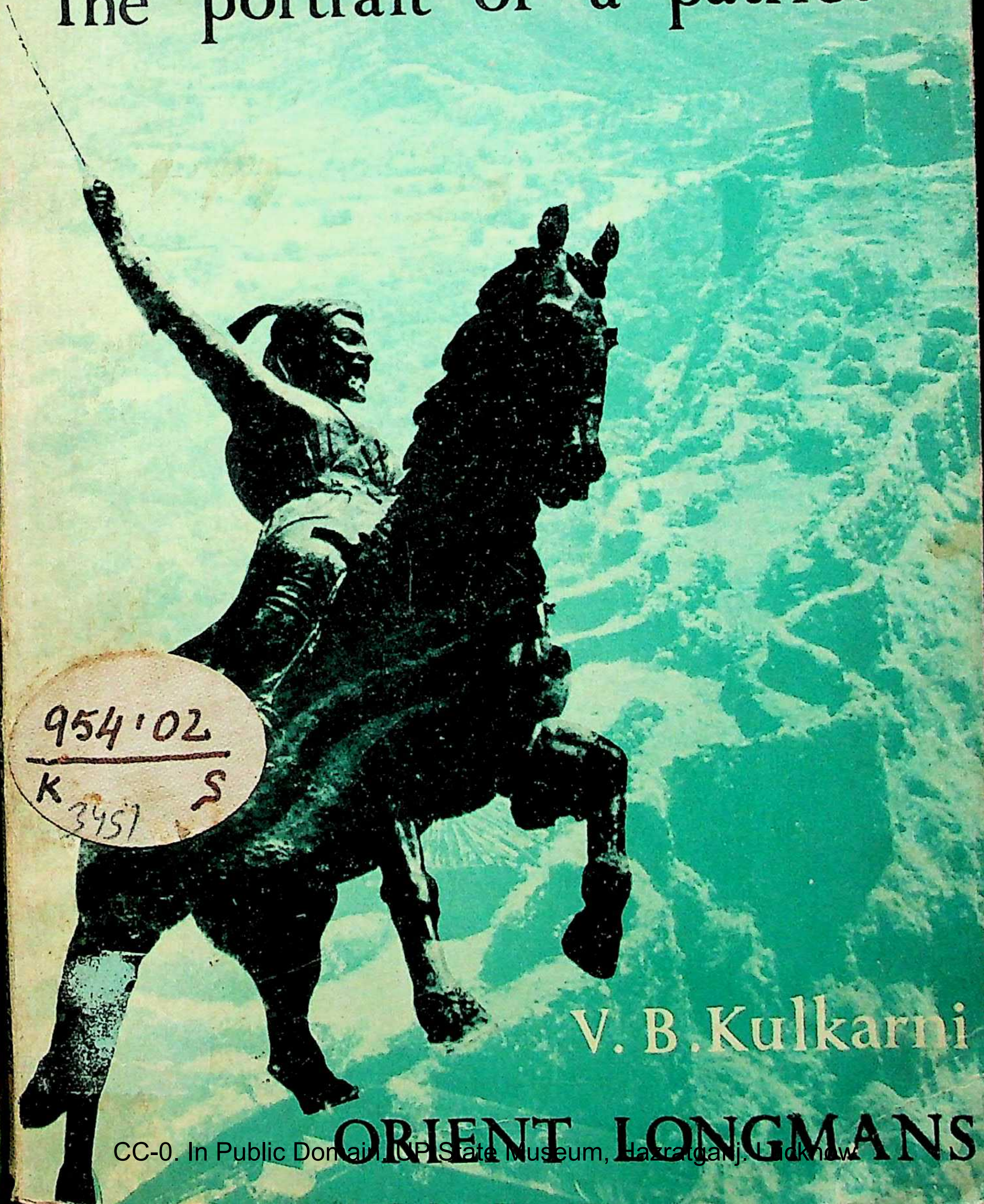
SHIVAJI

The portrait of a patriot



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SHIVAJI

THE PORTRAIT OF A PATRIOT

by

V. B. KULKARNI

With a Foreword by Shri Y. B. Chavan,
Union Minister for Defence, New Delhi

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To
My Father
BALKRISHNA RAO

FOREWORD

Shri V. B. Kulkarni was good enough to request me to write a Foreword to his book on SHIVAJI. There are several books on Shivaji, but, as Shri Kulkarni has himself stated, the aim of his book is very simple, viz., to present Shivaji not only as a man of great personal rectitude, of broad humanity and of a wider perspective, but also as a maker of history. Although it is stated that the book does not seek to unearth any startling facts or throw new light on the obscure corners of Maratha history, there is no doubt that Shri Kulkarni has drawn upon a large number of published works on Shivaji and presented a lucid picture of the Maratha history of the period.

Shivaji played a very important role in the resurgence of our nation. He was not only a great warrior but a sound administrator. His life and work is no doubt a source of great inspiration to all of us.

I am glad that Shri Kulkarni has attempted in this book to present the subject methodically and in lucid language. I have no doubt that the book will be a useful addition to the study of the life of Shivaji and the Maratha history.

Y. B. CHAVAN
Union Minister for Defence,
New Delhi.

New Delhi
15 April 1963

PREFACE

THE aim of this book is to present a true picture of Shivaji's greatness as a soldier-statesman. Like some historical personages, Shivaji has suffered grievously at the hands of a few but influential writers. The fact that they too acknowledge his greatness rather emphasises the Olympian stature of Shivaji than bear witness either to their sense of impartiality or their faculty for sound judgment.

Shivaji's true eminence can be understood only after a full realization of the deplorable condition to which the majority of the Indian population had been reduced before his rise to power. Similarly, we cannot measure the depth of the degradation of the people of his time unless we gain a clear perspective of the heights of civilization that had been scaled by their ancestors in ancient and medieval India. It is for this reason that the first chapter in the book has been devoted to a detailed discussion of this essential theme.

Shivaji's message will remain valid so long as courage, self-reliance and tolerance are esteemed as virtues worthy of cultivation. It was with the aid of these qualities that he succeeded in changing the course of history. Perhaps, the best justification for the present book is that it seeks to prove that he was indeed a man of destiny.

I am deeply grateful to Mr. Y. B. Chavan, India's Defence Minister, for writing his Foreword to this book.

I thank Mr. D. S. Bakhle, I.C.S. (Retd.) for going through the typescript of this book.

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CHAPTER 1

INDIA DOWN THE AGES

THERE are already a number of books on Shivaji, but the need for many more well-informed and competently written ones will always be felt. Like things of beauty and joy, the lives of truly great men are of abiding interest and instruction. We behold the mighty and towering Himalayas and are again and again lost in wonder at their rugged and snow-crowned splendour. It is equally so with the grandeur of human achievement. We cannot turn our backs on history and yet remain loyal to our heritage. The civilization of mankind is the sum total of the strivings of a succession of exalted personages. It is precisely for this reason that our interest in the doings of such men as Alexander, Ashoka, Caesar, Augustus, Napolean and Abraham Lincoln is undiminished and perennial.

Shivaji's title to fame and to our grateful remembrance rests on sound foundations. By his historic labours he uplifted a downtrodden and degraded people and restored to them their manhood and the immemorial pieties of their ancient land. He saw with the clarity of a statesman the need for asserting the political independence of the Hindus as the only means of establishing a real community of interest between them and the Muslim minority. He realized the futility of promoting such concord so long as the majority of the population lay suppliant, with no courage or ability to remedy the wrong. It was only from a position of strength that the aggrieved community could hope to create a new basis for Hindu-Muslim relations.

Shivaji undertook this historic task with the sword in one hand and with the emblems of peace and tolerance in the other. There was no hatred or animosity in his campaign on behalf of Hindu resurgence. His respect for Islam and its Holy Book, his veneration for the learned men of that faith and the liberal recruitment of Muslims to his army and navy, furnish the most convincing proofs of the essential catholicity of his crusade.

For this reason and for many others that will be discussed in the subsequent chapters, Shivaji stands apart from, and far above, the successful adventurers. Indeed by founding the Maratha Empire he gave a new direction to the Indian history and thus paved the way for Hindu-Muslim collaboration in the common cause of national freedom when in later centuries the country came under the rule of another alien power. Such a new dispensation could never have been possible if the Muslim rule had remained unchallenged.

Shivaji was thus the benefactor, not of any one community, but of the entire Indian nation. His cause and its success brought him instant recognition as a great liberator. "Divine honours," says Mahamahopadyaya P. V. Kane, "were paid to Shivaji even in his lifetime for effectively freeing his people from the curse of capricious and tyrannical rule." It, therefore, behoves us to make a deeper study of this remarkable man and to reflect on the lessons which his achievements have taught us. The abiding significance of his contribution to Indian history can best be understood by recalling the splendour of the ancient Hindu civilization, its decline and its eventual rehabilitation, following the patriotic labours of outstanding men like him.

The history of India, beginning with the Indus Valley Civilization, dates back to many millenniums before Christ and unfolds to our view the spectacle of the monumental achievements of her people in all the essential domains of human activity. The Aryan seers, who gave India and the world the *Vedas* and the *Upanishads,* those archives of Hindu wisdom, delved deep into the unprobed regions of the mind and stumbled upon new truths and experiences that have made a vital contribution to the philosophic heritage of mankind. The antiquity, the depth and the great empirical quality of the Hindu philosophic literature have made a profound impression on many distinguished Western scholars and thinkers. "The study of the *Upanishads,*" declared Schopenhauer, "has been the solace of my life, it will be the solace of my death." The eminent Professor Max Muller, besides heartily endorsing this remarkable affirmation of faith, proclaimed his own indebtedness to *Vedanta* in guiding him through life.

Ancient India's contribution however, was, not confined merely to the concerns of the spirit. She rose to great altitudes of material prosperity and played no small part in extending the frontiers of secular knowledge. A long procession of poets, bards, scholars, sculptors, artists and master-builders flourished during the Hindu period, continually enriching and enlarging the culture of the country. Pursuit of knowledge became the governing passion of the country which abounded in schools and teachers, and the gift of *vidya* or knowledge was considered the highest form of charity. The traditions of scholarship established at such ancient and celebrated seats of learning as Taxila, Banaras, Nalanda, Kanchi, Vallabhi and Vikramasila have ensured the preservation of the country's enthusiasm for knowledge down the ages so that education has never been exotic in this land.

Indeed, in no country were the words of Cicero in praise of the study of literature better appreciated than in India. The classical language of the land, Sanskrit, was developed to the highest pitch of excellence, evoking the unstinted admiration of many scholars, including that of that linguistic genius, Sir William Jones, who wrote that, whatever could have been its antiquity, Sanskrit was of a "wonderful structure, more perfect than the Greek, more copious than the Latin and more exquisitely refined than either". India's record in art, architecture and painting is no less inspiring. Beginning with the austerely utilitarian architecture of the Indus civilization, she steadily built up her artistic traditions which found their highest fulfilment in the times of the Guptas, rightly described as the Periclean Age of India. Among her votive offerings to human knowledge the invention of the decimal system is perhaps the most precious and conspicuous. The greatest Indian astronomer and mathematician, Aryabhata, discussed with profound understanding such abstruse subjects as quadratic equations and sines and explained eclipses, solstices and equinoxes, besides announcing the roundness of the earth and its diurnal revolution on its axis, in "daring anticipation of Renaissance science". Great progress was also made in the science of medicine and as far back as the sixth century before Christ, Hindu physicians were able to describe a large number of the delicate parts of the anatomy hidden from the eye with amazing clarity and confidence.

We have the testimony of foreign observers like Megasthanese and Hieuen Tsang that ancient and medieval India abounded in wealth and prosperity. She owed her might, majesty and affluence pre-eminently to the industry and resourcefulness of her people who were convinced adherents of the doctrine that the greatness of a country depends upon wealth and that wealth is created by work.

The wide ranging interests of the Indians and their spirit of adventure yielded astounding results. The country's venerable and beneficent culture spread to far-off lands, and more especially to those of South-East Asia, which accepted India's ministrations without doubt or demur. They learnt from her the inestimable art of writing, readily adopted her crafts and skills and enthusiastically allowed their native religion and culture to be fertilized and enriched by those of India. At no time was the sword employed in accomplishing this historic revolution in those far-off lands.

"From Persia to the Chinese sea," says Sylvain Levi, "from the icy regions of Siberia to the islands of Java and Borneo, from Oceania to Socotra, India has propagated her beliefs, her tales and her civilization. She has left indelible imprints on one-fourth of the human race in the course of a long succession of centuries. She has the right to reclaim in universal history the rank that ignorance has refused her for a long time and to hold her place amongst the great nations, summarising and symbolising the spirit of humanity."

Such was the greatness and glory of ancient and medieval India. But, after shedding the lustre of her civilization in her own land and in many others for long ages, she fell, irresistibly reminding us of de Tocquille's sage observation that sometimes the progress of man is so rapid that the desert reappears behind him. Such a catastrophe overtook India because, towards the end of her noble career, her immense capacity for the absorption of alien races and cultures and her ability to adjust herself to the changing times gave place to rigidity and stagnation which, in the history of all civilizations, have always been the precursors of decay and dissolution. "A great civilization," says a writer, "is not conquered from without until it has destroyed itself within."

The downfall of the Hindus was indeed inevitable. Seldom democratic in its content, their social organization developed graver iniquities in course of time, while their political and military systems became dangerously outmoded and unserviceable. For four hundred years, broadly from A.D. 600-1000, India lay prostrate, with no strong government to guard her frontiers and no stirring reformist movement to revitalize her body politic. She invited conquest, and it came in all its frightfulness. A venerable civilization, defended by feeble hands, was confronted by a young foreign power that had only lately crossed the threshold into the polity of Islam.

During its historic march towards the goal of world dominion, Islam did not, in the early period of its career, have recourse to violence or coercion in order to gain new adherents to its creed. The success of the Arab government, says H.A.L. Fisher, "largely consisted in the wise policy of toleration which they practised towards Jews and Christians, presenting in this respect the happiest contrast to the persecuting practices of their successors." Indeed, it was as a pacific religion that Islam first came to India in the beginning of the eighth century and was cordially welcomed by princes and people alike.

There cannot be any doubt that the religious and political history of India would have been entirely different if the penetration of Islam into the country had continued to be peaceful, deriving its strength and sanctions solely from the approbation of the people and the toleration of the rulers of the land. The fact that it did not happen so is a national misfortune, the disastrous effects of which are reflected in the artificial and arbitrary division of the country into two mutually exclusive and independent States.

It was perhaps a perverse freak of history that the task of spreading the message of Prophet Muhammad in India fell on the Turk. Embracing the new faith with neophyte intensity, the freebooters from the steppes of Turkestan, armed with short bows and curved scimitars, overran large parts of Asia with such swiftness that in 1055 their leader, Togrul Beg, was proclaimed Sultan in Baghdad and was "loaded by the effete Abhasid Caliph with all the titles and honours which are indicative of secular pre-eminence in the Moslem world". The *forte* of the Turk, says Dr. Habibullah, was the sword and in all the tasks that he undertook he brought to bear upon them a "boundless energy, an all-pervading racialism and the fierce orthodoxy of a neo-convert". With complete freedom from consistency, the Turk joined to these qualities a "grossly materialistic" outlook on life.

It was this race of foreigners, led by Mahmud of Ghazni, that descended upon India, determined, not to participate in the joys and the abounding prosperity of her people, but to despoil and humiliate them. Beginning from 1000, Mahmud invaded the country seventeen times and carried away immense wealth from the shrines and homes of its inhabitants whom he treated with primeval ferocity. In the expressive words of Will Durant, the Sultan of Ghazni was indeed a "magnificent thief" and his idol-smashing ecstasies were essentially inspired by the knowledge that the poorly-defended temples of India abounded in wealth. And yet by a cynical misinterpretation of the basically tolerant tenets of Islam, this specialist in spoliation, rapine and wreckage was acclaimed as a *Gazi!* Rapturous accounts of his exploits in India were written by bigots who produced a mighty volume of violent literature glorifying his misdeeds.

After Mahmud's death in 1030 Northern India was not convulsed by any major invasions for nearly one century and a half, but the Hindus persisted in their folly of fighting among themselves and thus exposing their homeland to fresh aggressions. The new invader was Muhammad of Ghor, who, like the earlier freebooter, was drawn towards this country by its teeming riches. His discomfiture in 1178 and his defeat in 1191 at the hands of Prithviraj Chauhan, merely postponed the downfall of India. In the following year he returned to the country and encountering Prithviraj on the same battlefield of Tarain, delivered a decisive blow to Hindu power. Prithviraj, the hero of many stirring ballads, was killed and with him perished the independence of Northern India. After collecting immense booty which was carried on 1400 camels the victorious Sultan returned to his country, leaving behind Qutb-ud-din Aibak to prosecute the war against the 'infidels'.

Aibak, a manumitted slave and a "typical specimen of the ferocious Central Asian warriors of the time", became the founder of what has come to be known as the Slave dynasty, with which Muslim rule began in India—a fitting retribution to the disunited, demoralised and suicidal Hindus. Aibak's able general, Muhammad Khalji, played a notable part in extending the frontiers of Islam in India by conquering Bihar and Bengal.

After the destruction of Hindu independence in the north it was impossible to expect that the Deccan and the south could long be successful in defending their integrity. They too presented the melancholy picture of a house divided against itself. In fact, the region had deteriorated into a veritable cockpit of competing sovereignties, inviting conquest and enslavement. In 1294 Ala-ud-din Khalji, Governor of Kara, waged a successful war against Ramachandra, the Yadava ruler of Devagiri and, capturing his capital, exacted an astounding amount of tribute from him. After stealing the throne of Delhi by cruelly putting his aged uncle and patron to death, Ala-ud-din, who has won notoriety in history as the man who "shed more innocent blood than a Pharaoh was ever guilty of", deputed his favourite, Malik-Naib Kafur, on a second expedition to the south.

Kafur was a converted eunuch and there was ironic justice in the choice of this commander for the destruction of Hindu manhood in the south. Devagiri was promptly reduced to submission and thenceforward Ramachandra, its ruler, became the most pliant and debased tool of the Delhi Sultan. To retain the favour of his paramount lord, Ramachandra sold the honour of his family and became an accomplice in the destruction of the ancient ruling houses of Warrangal and Dwarasamudra. The victorious general penetrated deep into the south and desecrated the temples of the famous pilgrim centres of Chidambaram, Srirangam and Madura and returned to Delhi laden with immense booty. Two years after Ramachandra's death, his assertive son was defeated and the historic realm of the Yadavas was finally annexed to the Sultanate of Delhi in 1313. Earlier, in 1297, Ala-ud-din's army had overrun Gujarat and eclipsed its independent sovereignty.

The reasons for the downfall of the Hindus and the conquest of their ancient land by a handful of foreigners comprehend nearly all the important aspects of their national life. First, the institution of *Ashwamedha* or horse sacrifice, originally conceived and used as a device for bringing the entire or large parts of the country within the frame of a single government, eventually degenerated into a potent instrument of disunity among the members of the ruling class. A weak emperor became a convenient target of attack by his vassals whose competition for independent sovereignty gravely undermined the country's political unity. The fact that Mahmud of Ghazni could launch seventeen sanguinary invasions against India with impunity furnishes the most conclusive evidence that the princes of the country had forgotten the value of concerted action both then and thereafter.

Secondly, the Hindus showed an amazing inability to adapt their military methods to the changing requirements of the times. The composition and the strategy of their armies were dictated by principles that had become hopelessly out of date, especially when they were ranged against a resourceful and determined enemy like the invading Muslims. Their absurd and incurable faith in the value of war-elephants was often disastrous to their cause. The vastness, combined with the looseness of the Hindu hordes, gravely undermined the mobility and the striking power of their troops. There was no provision in their strategy against the contingency of surprise attacks from the flanks and the rear. It did not take long for the Muslim commanders to detect the fatal weakness of their adversaries, against whom they invariably won resounding victories with ludicrously small but well-disciplined and mobile armies consisting mostly of cavalry.

Thirdly, the concept of fair fighting was often carried to absurd lengths by the Hindus, despite their repeated experience that the opposing forces were inhibited by no such scruples. The Rajput, for example, was imbued with all the kindred virtues of the Western cavalier; he was recklessly bold and more than a match for the redoubtable Turk, but he was extremely deficient in organization. His belief that he should win or perish on the battlefield was suicidal both to him and to his country. Large-scale self-destruction, involving the flower of Hindu chivalry, rendered the task of the enemy in overrunning the country much easier. The concept of retreat and of rearguard action in order to be able to return to the attack under more favourable conditions did not find much favour. "The live dog," says Professor Basham, commenting on Hindu strategy, "was no longer thought to be better than the dead lion, in so far as the spirit of the Epics permeated Hindu life."

Fourthly, the issues of victory and defeat were often staked on the safety of the commander. An entire army, even though it might have been on the verge of victory, was apt to suffer a complete rout if it became leaderless due to the sudden death or disappearance of its commander. Again, the fortunes of an entire kingdom and the fate of many generations were almost irretrievably committed to the outcome of a single battle. One decisive blow nearly ended all effective future resistance. Too much was staked in a single throw of the dice.

Lastly, social disharmony hastened the dissolution of Hindu leadership of the country. By abandoning their wide-ranging interests, the Hindus developed strange obsessions and prejudices that were most inimical to progress and reform. Alberuni, the eminent Muslim scholar and a man of keen perception, noted and deplored the conceit, the smugness and the narrow outlook of the Hindus and, commenting on their fallen condition, recalled that their ancestors were refreshingly different from them.

The Hindus were brought face to face with the Muslim invaders when they were in such a degenerate condition. The newcomers were not barbarians, but most of them were indifferent to the fact that tolerance is the highest attribute of civilized behaviour. The sword having won the most glittering prize for them, they refused to see any greatness in the country and its people. The immense undefended wealth of the land excited their avarice beyond measure, provoking them to acts of unbridled vandalism. Bigotry also played no small part in distorting their mental outlook.

Ala-ud-din Khalji, for instance, framed comprehensive rules to hasten the debasement of the sons of the soil and to ensure their exploitation. "No Hindu," it was decreed, "could hold up his head and in their houses no sign of silver or gold ... or of any superfluity was to be seen." Another monarch, Firuz Shah, claimed that India was a Mussalman country and sought to make good this assertion by encouraging widespread apostasy. Commenting on Firuz's missionary labours and their success, the *Oxford History of India* says: "Such was the origin of a large part of the existing Muslim population. Several other sovereigns continued the process of conversion by bribery." And such, we may add, is the perversity of human affairs that, by a process of political jugglery, the descendants of these very converts were in later centuries transformed into a separate 'nation' and given a new homeland by partitioning the country.

The disabilities of the Hindus were indeed all-embracing. Since it was impossible on religious grounds to take them into partnership in the government of the country, they were reduced to the status of a disfranchised community, with no political rights of their own. "If their existence," writes Sir Jadunath Sarkar, the eminent historian of the Moghuls, "was tolerated, it was only to use them as hewers of wood and drawers of water" and as tax-payers "for the benefit of the dominant sect of the faithful". The list of Hindu disabilities presented by Sarkar is formidable, and the unjust treatment meted out to the community offered the most convincing proof of the need for creating a new order based on justice and tolerance.

There were, of course, excellent Muslim princes like Sher Shah and Akbar who refused to surrender their sense of justice and fair-play to fanaticism. But, apart from the fact that there were no enforceable sanctions to ensure the continuity of good and impartial government under successive Sultans, there was an inherent injustice in the very basis of the country's political disposition. No system of government could be morally or legally acceptable so long as the majority of the population was denied a share in the administration in its own right. Such a partnership between the Hindus and the Muslims became virtually impossible when the entire policy of the government was so blatantly religious and communal. To add to these political disabilities, the Hindus were often subjected to religious persecution.

Relief for the Hindus, therefore, lay in the recovery of their manhood and in the restoration of their sovereignty. Such resurgence was inaugurated in the south by the great Rayas of Vijayanagar. Founded in 1336 to stem the tide of Muslim conquest, the Vijayanagar Empire served as the citadel of *dharma* for nearly two and a half centuries, during which period it rose to great altitudes of prosperity, attaining the highest glory under the government of its wise and valiant ruler, Krishnadeva Raya.

The Muslim succession States of the Bahmani kingdom in the Deccan had never accepted the existence of a powerful Hindu empire in their proximity as a desirable political disposition, but their predilections were of no importance so long as the Rayas remained invincible. They, however, succeeded in uniting among themselves and in destroying the great empire in the fateful battle of Rakshasa-Tangadi, miscalled Talikot, on January 25, 1565. The victorious armies of the allied Muslim powers fell upon the noble city of Vijayanagar with unexampled savagery. "Never perhaps in the history of the world," writes Robert Sewell, "has such havoc been wrought, and wrought so suddenly, on so splendid a city; teeming with a wealthy and industrious population in the full plenitude of prosperity one day, and on the next seized, pillaged, and reduced to ruins, amid scenes of savage massacre and horrors beggaring description."

Reflecting on the destruction of Vijayanagar, Will Durant writes with deep sadness. "It is a discouraging tale, for its evident moral is that civilization is a precarious thing, whose delicate complex of order and liberty, culture and peace, may at any time be overthrown by barbarians invading from without or multiplying within." After the disappearance of the Vijayanagar Empire, panic and defeatism once again gripped the hearts of the Hindus who began to share the conviction of their conquerors that it was the unalterable ordinance of Providence that the Muslims alone should govern the world. Only a man of genius and of superhuman abilities could combat such fears and frustrations. Shivaji accomplished this task with conspicuous success.

The aim of this book is, therefore, simple. It does not seek to unearth any unknown or startling facts or to throw new light on the obscure corners of Maratha history. Its central object is to present Shivaji, not only as a man of great personal rectitude, of broad humanity and of penetrating perception, but also as the maker of history. In trying to appraise his stature we should ask ourselves what the fate and the future of India would have been if he had not been born and fulfilled his mission. If he and his successors had not proved conclusively that military skill and valour are not the exclusive monopoly of any one race or community, it is inconceivable that the debased Hindus and the exultant Muslims would ever have come together on the plane of equality, accepting India as their common mother-land. In fact, it was the Maratha military victories that ushered in a new era in the Hindu-Muslim relations, destroying once and for all the complexes that had for centuries kept them apart. Such mutual understanding and concord stimulated among them in later centuries a common spirit of nationalism which alone made it possible for India to regain her political independence from the British. We do not know whether Shivaji or the Peshwas could foresee that their actions would lead to such amazing results, but no right-thinking person can deny the fact that that is how history took its course. The following pages are intended to unfold the story of the remarkable man that inaugurated such a revolution in India's life.

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CHAPTER 2

A NEW STAR RISES

MAHARASHTRA, the home province of Shivaji,[1] was pre-eminently suited for the inauguration of a new era of Hindu resurgence. The physical features of the region and the traditions and the temper of its inhabitants favoured the promotion of such a momentous enterprise. Maharashtra, which holds a pivotal position in the Deccan, consists of two clearly-demarcated geographical regions, namely, the coastal strip called the Konkan and the plains of the Desh.

The Sahyadri mountain ranges, running almost parallel to the western seaboard, have from time immemorial played a decisive part in moulding the political, social and economic life of the people of Maharashtra. Lofty, rugged and in most places barren, the Ghats, as the mountain ranges are also called, dominate the landscape, towering majestically over the surrounding valleys and plains and standing sentinel to the freedom of the people. Their numerous passes, little known to outsiders, and the inaccessibility of the rugged terrain around the hills, offered a veritable tactical paradise to men inured to elusive warfare and a logistical nightmare to the invading armies. Here, in these mountain fastnesses, sheltered by deep and wooded valleys, the hillmen of Maharashtra performed prodigies of valour, often defeating and disgracing the mighty hordes that were sent against them time and again. The exploits of the Marathas were greatly helped by the hill-forts about which we will write at some length in a later chapter. In many places the flat summits were converted into strongholds, whose natural strength and inaccessibility made it relatively easy for a small but determined and resourceful garrison to hurl defiance at the most powerful enemy. The heavy rains on the Ghats, which in some places are as much as 250 inches in one season, ensured a regular and abundant supply of water to the defenders of the hill-forts. Grant Duff, who wrote his famous history of the Marathas more than a century ago, was perhaps right when he claimed that militarily there was "probably no stronger country in the world" than the hilly regions of Maharashtra.

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[1] Now known as Western Maharashtra.

The Konkan is a narrow strip of country sandwitched between the Arabian sea and the Sahyadri mountains. At no place in this region is the land between the sea and the monutain more than sixty miles broad. The climate of the Konkan, which receives a heavy rainfall, is generally moist and humid. During the monsoon the rivers overflow their banks, sometimes causing heavy damage to property, before they empty their waters into the sea. Most of them go dry during the hot months. While the land is singularly barren in places where the terrain of the Ghats dominates, the other districts are remarkably fertile and produce abundant crops, especially rice. The Konkan strip is inhabited by an enterprising people who, besides their seafaring traditions, have in the past supplied some of the ablest rulers, warriors and administrators to Maharashtra and indeed to India.

The second geographical region, the Desh, forms a considerable part of Maharashtra, where the bulk of the State's population lives. The people here are more sturdily built and are passionately devoted to their farmlands. The rolling plains are ideally suited for modern agricultural operations. In spite of the insufficiency and the uncertainty of the rains, the Desh has long been the granary of Maharashtra and grows wheat, jawar and cash crops in abundance. Fortunately, Maharashtra is well-served by large rivers like the Godavari, the Bhima, the Krishna, the Koyna, the Tapi, the Wardha and the Vainganga. The comprehensive proposals under the successive five-year plans to harness these rivers for purposes of irrigation and power supply will, when they materialise, not only liberate the peasantry from the vagaries of the monsoon, but also usher in a new era of industrialization in the State.[2]

[2] The new State of Maharashtra, consisting of Vidarbha, Marathwada and the Marathi-speaking districts of the former State of Bombay, came into existence in May 1960. It has an area of

Dating back to many centuries and recorded by diverse observers, we have copious accounts about the racial characteristics of the people of Maharashtra, their courage and resourcefulness, their pride and patriotism, and their hospitality and generous disposition. As in most parts of the country, the Maharashtrians are a composite race, in whose veins the blood of both the Aryans and the non-Aryans flows. The famous Chinese traveller and scholar Hiuen Tsang, who visited Maharashtra about the year 641 during his long stay in India, writes about its people: "Whoever does them a service may count on their gratitude, but no one who offends them will escape their vengeance. If any one insults them, they will risk their lives to wipe out the affront. If any one in trouble applies to them, forgetful of themselves they will hasten to help him."

The courage of the Marathas on the battlefield and their skill and determination in facing the most implacable enemy are the subject of high praise both by medieval and modern writers. In the days of Shivaji and the Peshwas and in our own time during the two world wars, the Maratha troops covered themselves with glory by their unflinching courage and valour. They are indeed the sword-arm of the Deccan. The Maharastrians have shown the same sterling qualities in pursuit of peace and this is exemplified by their devotion to religion, art and literature.

The simplicity, the frankness, the spirit of independence and the liberal outlook that mark the character of the people of Maharashtra are fully shared by their women-folk. There is nothing weak or pliant about these women who bring lustre to the Maharashtrian homes by their vivacity and by their refreshingly realistic attitude towards life and its problems. They are in fact looked upon and treated as honoured part-

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1,18,459 square miles and accounts for more than 10 per cent. of the total extent of the Indian Union, of which it forms an integral and important part. The State has twenty-six administrative districts, with a population of 3.95 crores, according to the census of 1961.

ners whose counsel is much prized and respected. As we shall see in the following pages, the influence of Jijabai upon her great son, Shivaji, was decisive. Her grandaughter-in-law, Tarabai, has won an honoured place in history by leading her people to victory against the powerful Moghul aggressors. Who has not heard of Ahalyabai Holkar whose piety and noble deeds are still remembered with deep respect? Nor can we forget the celebrated exploits of the Rani of Jhansi during the great uprising of 1857. Such is the glorious tradition of the womanhood of Maharashtra.

We may now refer briefly to the history of Maharashtra before the rise of the Marathas to Power. Little is known about the happenings in this part of the country in the centuries before Christ, but we are vouchsafed a fairly vivid picture of the doings of the great Shatavahana rulers who flourished for some three hundred years till the second century A.D. Paithan, their capital, was acclaimed as "the jewel and glory of Maharashtra" and abounded in spacious palaces, splendid mansions and gorgeous temples. It was during the sway of the Shatavahanas and their successors that the largest and most famous artificial caves were excavated in the Western Deccan. Bhaja, near Poona, is the oldest cave temple in this part of the country and it set the pace for a further development of shrines of this kind both in size and splendour. Probably excavated about the beginning of the Christian era, the Karla cave temple, with its great *chaitya* hall, is described as the finest single example of such places of worship.

The Shatavahanas were followed by the Traikutakas and the Vakatakas. The latter were powerful monarchs whose government lasted from 300-600. The Vakatakas were patrons of art and learning and encouraged further excavations of the famous Ajanta caves. The earliest of these caves date back to the second century before Christ, but the series were not completed before the seventh century A.D. "The splendid sculpture and lovely paintings," writes Professor Basham, "with which they are adorned make them one of the most glorious monuments of India's past." As observed earlier, the murals of Ajanta are pronounced to be "among the greatest surviving paintings of any ancient civilization".

Then came the imperial Chalukyas of Badami in the Bijapur district of north Karnatak. They governed extensive regions of the Deccan, including Maharashtra, for about two centuries from the middle of the sixth century till about the middle of the eighth century. Pulakeshin II (A.D. 610-11 to 642) was their greatest ruler and the Aihole inscription claims that the Chalukyan monarch defeated the great Harsha of Kanauj. Pulakeshin's conquests were extensive and they secured for him sovereignty over three *maharashtrakas* or great kingdoms consisting of 99,000 *gramas,* a word of doubtful meaning. It was during the reign of this king that the Chinese pilgrim Hiuen Tsang visited Maharashtra. Pulakeshin's fame spread far and wide and he was known in Persia. The Chalukyas were renowned patrons of art and architecture.

About 752, the Chalukya dynasty was overthrown by Dantidurga, a feudatory of the Empire. His successors, the Rashtrakutas built up another extensive empire which they governed with great wisdom and efficiency. Distinguished among the Rashtrakuta rulers was Krishna I who was not only a great conqueror but also a mighty builder. He patronised the construction of the famous rock-cut Shiva temple at Ellora which is rightly looked upon as a marvel of architecture. The ascendancy of the Rashtrakutas in the Deccan lasted from about 753 to 975. Paying a high tribute to them, Dr. Altekar says that "no other ruling dynasty in the Deccan played such a dominant part in the history of India till the rise of the Marathas as an imperial power in the eighteenth century". Similar eulogy was bestowed upon them by the Muslim writer Masudi who praised the dynasty for its tolerance towards his co-religionists. Referring to the Rashtrakuta Kings as Balhara, Masudi wrote: "There is none among the rulers of Sind and Hind who in his territory respects the Muslims like Raja Balhara. In his kingdom Islam is honoured and protected. And for them mosques and congregational mosques, which are always full, have been built for offering prayers five times."

There was a revival of the Chalukyan hegemony in the Deccan which lasted with varying degrees of effectiveness till 1189. The last king of the dynasty was stripped of his sovereignty by Bhillama in that year or earlier. Bhillama founded the Yadava dynasty which began to govern the Deccan from Devagiri. The Yadava monarchs were enlightened men who liberally used the resources of their State to promote learning and scholarship. It was during their reign that Marathi took a definite shape, claiming its rightful place among the important languages of the country.

A good deal of uncertainty exists about the actual antiquity of the Marathi language, but it is, without doubt, much more than seven hundred years old. A large part of the Marathi literature of the pre-British period has still to see the light of the day. Even so, there is ample published material, which is being continually augmented by the devoted labours of contemporary writers. The classical Marathi poetry is of great excellence and the richness and the variety of the language is best reflected in the ballad poetry and folk-songs. Marathi is indeed a vigorous and resilient language, which is wholy unaffected by the prejudices of the so-called purists against enriching itself by means of judicious adaptations from other tongues. It is precisely because it has protected itself from stagnation and atrophy that Marathi faces the future with great confidence, being determined to develop itself into an effective vehicle of thought and expression in order to meet the manifold needs of a modern society.

The first great Marathi author was Mukundaraja whose famous philosophical work *Vivekasindhu* was written in 1190. He wrote many other books on philosophy and was greatly honoured for his scholarship. By far the greatest luminary in the Marathi literature is Dnyandev whose historic contribution to the domain of letters will be discussed presently. Much impetus was given to the language and literature by the movements in Maharashtra devoted to the reformation of the social and religious life of the people. Pre-eminent among such crusaders were the inspired band of the poet-saints of the Pandharpur school whose pious labours, as we shall soon see, caused a great revolution in the mental outlook of the common people, thus paving the way for Shivaji's campaign for political emancipation.

The sovereignty of Maharashtra and indeed of the entire south suffered a long period of eclipse following the defeat of the Yadava King, Ramachandra, by Ala-ud-din Khalji in 1294. The circumstances in which Hindu leadership in the south was destroyed by the Muslim invaders have already been discussed in the first chapter. As in the north, perpetual warfare among the rulers of the Deccan and the south gravely undermined their unity and their will to resist the aggressors.

It was, for example, the proud claim of the Rashtrakuta imperialists that during the reign of Dhruva, one of their energetic and expansionist sovereigns, a number of his neighbouring princes were either in his prison or were his defeated vassals. Again, Ramachandra, the unfortunate Yadava King, failed to realize, notwithstanding his wisdom and benevolence, that a career of conquest was extremely dangerous when his own State and the entire south were threatened with common ruin by the waxing power of the Muslims. The fact of the matter is that the Hindu princes were obsessed with the misguided belief that territorial aggrandizement was part of their kingly responsibilities and a religious obligation. And when their thrones toppled down, it was not they but the common people who struggled and finally succeeded in winning back the heritage of the land under the inspiration of saints and savants.

As we saw earlier, among the many factors that contributed to the downfall of the Hindus was the failure of their social organisation to retain its pristine vigour and resilience. It is true that an essential feature of the caste system was the division of society into a hierarchy, with its principles of status and subordination, but the gradation had caused no great harm so long as the social order functioned basically as a nexus of rights and obligations. It was precisely because of its remarkable adaptability that such diverse races as the Greeks, the Huns and the Scythians that poured into the country from time to time, found a ready asylum in its hospitable and capacious bosom. There would indeed have been no religious problem in India if Hinduism had exercised a similar beneficent influence upon the early settlers of the Islamic faith in this country. Its failure to do so and the absence of a spirit of adjustment and accommodation among the newcomers, especially in the government of the country and in the propagation of their religion, caused a further demoralization in the Hindu ranks. Seldom in history have a defeated people served as a model to their masters in fashioning and regulating their lives.

Restoration of cohesion and flexibility to the social system of the Hindus thus became a necessary prelude to the realization of their political aspirations. Religious reformers arose in many parts of the country and turned a powerful stream of criticism on the champions of the *status quo,* reaction and obscurantism. The Alvars and others of the Tamilnad, the great Basaveswara of Karnatak and his followers known as the Lingayats, the Vaishnava devotees of Bengal led by Chaitanya, Baba Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, and many others, inveighed against caste arrogance, against a blind adherence to ritual and dogma and against unbridled fetish worship. In fact, they declared war on every belief and practice that lengthened the distance between God and man.

The tradition of reform and progress was particularly strong in Maharashtra. A succession of saints and scholars, drawn from every stratum of society, proclaimed the unity of God's creation and from the depth of their own mystic experience, communicated the "symphony of the soul" to their followers. The leader of this great movement was Dnyandev, who flourished towards the end of the thirteenth century. He was a man of amazing versatility and, besides being a saint and a scholar, he was an outstanding literary genius. His masterpiece, *Dnyaneshwari,* which is an exposition of the *Bhagavad Gita,* is venerated as a treasure-house of Marathi literature. "All the weight and distinction," wrote the late Mr. Justice M. G. Ranade, "that the Marathi language possesses, it owes to

Dnyaneshwar" and added that "to realize the depth of meaning that is contained in the language one must study the *Dnyaneshwari.*"

The rendering of a great work in a foreign language is perhaps a form of vandalism. It has been truly said that you have only to translate Cicero to despise him. Bearing this limitation in mind, we may reproduce here a piece from the *Dnyaneshwari:*

> Who day and night are from all passion free,
> Within their holy hearts I love to be,
> Dwelling in sanctity.
> Hearts of a fervent faith to them belong,
> Where Dharma reigns; in them that power is strong,
> That knows right or wrong.
> They bathe in Wisdom; then their hunger stay,
> With Perfectness; lo, all in green array,
> The leaves of Peace are they.
> Buds of Attainment these; columns they are
> In Valour's hall; of joy fetched from afar
> Each a full water-jar.
> So dear the path of *bhakti,* they despise
> The great Release; e'en in their sport there lies
> The wisdom of the wise.
> With pearls of Peace their limbs they beautify;
> Within their minds as in a scabbard I,
> The All-indweller, lie.
> Therefore their love waxes unceasingly,—
> These great-souled ones; not the least rift can be
> Between their hearts and me.

This great prophet of Vedism, who bore the weight of his knowledge so lightly, disdained boastful scholars and taught them some memorable lessons in humility. He dismantled the barrier between the common man and the learned few by writing his great works in Marathi, the language of the people. He was foremost in establishing the tradition that language is a cultural instrument *par excellence* and certainly not a collection of dead sentences.

The example of Dnyandev communicating his experiences, thoughts and wisdom through the language of the people was followed by a band of poet-saints who not only revolutionized the Marathi literature, but also stimulated a feeling of oneness among the people. Pandharpur became the centre of their devotions and Vithoba, the presiding deity, the object of their adoration and pious labours. The movement was broad-based and democratic and gathered strength and volume with the efflux of time. Men of humble origin, equipped with no formal education, sang in praise of God with all the fervour of their unsophisticated consciousness.

Namdev, a saint of the fourteenth century, was a tailor and yet the fact of his so-called low birth did not prevent him from writing lyrics of unsurpassed beauty and simplicity, which still work like an enchantment on his readers. Indeed, so great and popular are his literary compositions that they have secured an honourable mention in Guru Nanak's *Granthsaheb.* Namdev died at the age of eighty in 1350 and had the satisfaction of watching the amazing career of his female attendant, Janabai, who became an accomplished poetess, her devotional songs winning a distinctive place in the *abhanga* literature of Maharashtra.

Here is a brief example of Namdev's abhorrence of egoism. He says :

> From Vedic students first the truth I sought,
> And found them full of "Thou shalt", "Thou shalt not".
> Never shall they possess tranquillity,
> For mighty in them is the power of "me".

Eknath, described by G. S. Sardesai, the well-known historian of the Marathas, as the "greatest Marathi writer of the sixteenth century," was a Brahmin who sincerely strove to eliminate all man-made distinctions among his fellow-men. He pleaded for the firm establishment of equality and fraternity in the regulation of human affairs and set a shining example in religious and social democracy by taking his place with the humble and the lowly. The doctrine of equality, so eloquently preached by Eknath and others, crystallized into what is known as the *varkari* movement, the fundamental aim of which was to ignore the unjust and inequitable caste distinctions and gradations in the Hindu social system. "The *varkari* preachings of equality," says an authority, "find willing hearers among the Deccan Marathas who in peace as in war have always a hankering after equality." Eknath urged for a democratic outlook, not only in the relations between man and man, but also in the domain of letters. He showed exemplary devotion to Marathi, his mother tongue, and asked, if Sanskrit was the creation of gods, whether Marathi was the offspring of thieves.

Eknath's liberal outlook is best portrayed in the following lines:

> They say that women and Shudras belong to a low caste.
> But when you say that God dwells everywhere, then is He not in the heart of a Shudra?
> Has not a Shudra come from the same place as the Brahman?
> Is he not also composed of five elements?
> Has he no birth; has he no death?
> Eknath says: You are misguided when you say that a Shudra belongs to the lowest class.

The spiritual and cultural renascence in Maharashtra assumed wider proportions as more and more poet-saints of the Pandharpur school came forward to educate and enlighten the mind of the common man. Men and women, drawn from all classes and creeds and from every station in life, constituted this galaxy. Saint Sena was a barber, Sawata, a gardener, Chokhamela, an untouchable, Narahari, a goldsmith and Joga, an oilman. Far from being a disability, their humble origin was their best qualification for teaching the common man the first principles in belief and in social outlook so that he could emerge all the more readily from the trammels of superstition and ritualism. Indeed, it was the untiring labours of these devoted sons and daughters of God that greatly helped to popularize religion and to give unity of belief, "a tranquillizing daily ritual of prayer and a disciplined perspective of life" among all sections of the people.

The name of Tukaram stands pre-eminent among these popular teachers. This unique saint, whose *abhangs* are sung daily in millions of homes, sang in praise of Vithoba, his favourite deity, with an ecstasy that surpasses belief. His songs, meant for the learned as well as the lowly, are composed in the language of the common man with uncomman wisdom. Tukaram hailed from the *vani* or trading community and was a contemporary of Shivaji. It was both beyond his scope and his temperament to preach the sermon of political revolt to the people, but by stimulating in them a passionate devotion to their faith, he paved the way, perhaps unwittingly, for the advent of *swarajya* under the leadership of the great liberator. As a Marathi writer pertinently remarks, the region of Tukaram's ministrations became a prolific ground for the recruitment of soldiers to Shivaji's army.

The following passage vividly portrays Tukaram's capacity for complete self-surrender to God. He sings: "This is my prayer to Thee, O God. I place my head on Thy feet. Let my body be where it likes, but let my mind always rest on Thy feet. Let me spend my time in meditating on Thee. Let me turn away from body and mind and wealth. Release me at the time of death from such dangers as phlegm and wind and bile. So long as my senses are whole, I have called upon Thee, in order that Thou mightest help me ultimately."

Ramdas Swami, who was born in 1608 and survived his royal disciple, Shivaji, by a year, was cast in a different mould from that of the religious teachers that preceded or were contemporaneous with him. He was indeed a saint without the sack cloth. The tireless labours of a succession of poet-saints, extending over many centuries, had created among the people of Maharashtra a sense of oneness in their social and spiritual concerns, thus preparing the ground for a rapid growth of political consciousness. Ramdas Swami took full advantage of these favourable conditions. His heart bled at the sight of poverty and suffering and he was roused to indignation at the degradation of his people and their unchallenging submission to tyranny and oppression. He was a Brahmin, but he attacked the priestly class with devastating frankness for its failure to maintain high standards of personal rectitude, of learning and of leadership. He exposed the folly of despising worldly wisdom and refused to countenance any extreme form of "otherworldliness".

It is precisely because Ramdas's teachings constituted a remarkable combination of the spiritual with the mundane that they became most acceptable to Shivaji. The Swami advised his disciple "to adorn his body, not with clothes and ornaments, but with shrewdness and wisdom". To spread the message of God, to protect the poor, the pious and the helpless, to strive for the well-being of his subjects, to remain eternally vigilant, and to practise the virtue of forbearance and tolerance — these, declared Ramdas Swami, were the essential qualifications of a good and great ruler. He assured Shivaji that he enjoyed all these noble attributes in full measure and bade him Godspeed in his mighty undertaking. "Activism," declare the learned authors quoted earlier, was the most characteristic feature of Ramdas's teachings. "No wonder," they add, "that, with this teaching, he helped the foundation of the Maratha kingdom as no other saint had done before."

Conditions were thus most propitious in Maharashtra for striking boldly in the cause of independence, but the task could be undertaken only by a man of genius. Maharashtra abounded in powerful Maratha chieftains, but they had all sworn undying loyalty to one or the other of the three surviving succession States of the Bahmani kingdom, namely, Ahmadnagar, Bijapur and Golkonda. Lukhji Jadhavrao of Sindkhed, Shivaji's grandfather from his mother's side, was the premier Maratha nobleman at the court of the Nizamshah of Ahmadnagar. He was in command of ten thousand horse, for the support of which he enjoyed large estates. He was a man of great distinction and affluence and was widely respected both in the realm of his sovereign and outside. But his ambition never transgressed the bounds prescribed for a dutiful feudatory—a melancholy fact which did not prevent him from holding himself in the highest esteem, especially in his dealings with his fellow-Marathas.

Shivaji's own ancestors, the Bhosles of Verul,* a village near Daulatabad, were in the service of the Sultans of Ahmadnagar. In conformity with the convention of the time, they claimed descent from a remote scion of the Sisodia dynasty of Udaipur in Rajasthan. Maloji, Shivaji's grandfather, was an ambitious and determined person and it was these estimable qualities, more than his lineage, that brought him to the fore. Maloji and his brother, Vithoji, did not inherit any great fortune, but the absence of material prosperity at the beginning of their career was amply compensated for by their supreme confidence in themselves. Both were sturdily built and both were endowed with an abundance of courage and daring. They were never in doubt about their ability to forge to the forefront by their own resourcefulness. Maloji began his career by taking service under Jadhavrao, but the social distance that separated him from his master never daunted this determined man from entertaining the most vaulting ambitions both for himself and his family. His pertinacity and his value to the Sultan as a competent soldier eventually gave him success in full measure. After much hesitation, the proud Jadhavrao gave the hand of his daughter, Jijabai, in marriage to Maloji's son, Shahaji, the illustrious father of Shivaji.

Bijapur claimed the allegiance of a larger number of Maratha families among whom the Mores were pre-eminent. The Mores of Javli, near Mahableshwar, the famous hill-station in the State of Maharashtra, rose to power by their unflagging devotion to their Muslim overlords and by their ruthless campaign of aggression against their own kinsmen. They received the hereditary title of Chandrarao for the conspicuous display of courage by the head of the family in a critical situation and enjoyed a plenitude of prestige and influence in the hilly region till a just retribution overtook them for their perfidious conduct towards the great liberator. "The invariable submission," writes Grant Duff, "manifested by this Raja probably induced the government to exact little more than a nominal tribute from districts producing so little, and which had always been in disorder under Mahomedan management."

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* Now known as Ellora

The Nimbalkars of Phaltan, whose original surname was Pawar, were among the other Maratha pillars of the Bijapur Sultanate. Jagpalrao Naik was a shining light of the Nimbalkar family and, both in his ambitions and in his ability to realize them, he bore a striking resemblance to Maloji Bhosle, upon whom he bestowed his sister, Dipabai, in marriage. The union of the two distinguished families was of much significance and the advocacy of Jagpalrao on behalf of his brother-in-law played no small part in influencing the decision of the chief of Sindkhed to marry his daughter to Shahaji. Though small in size, Phaltan survived many political vicissitudes and functioned as a feudatory of the British Government in India till, along with the other Deccan States, it was integrated into Bombay State, following the merger agreement of February 1948.

It is profitless to pursue further the story of the Maratha vassals of the Muslim rulers, but the Ghorpades deserve special mention. With a few exceptions, the Ghorpades played an outstanding part both during the war of independence and later, thus winning an honoured place for themselves in the annals of Maharashtra. Originally known as Bhosles, they secured the new surname, following the display of exceptional resourcefulness by one of their ancestors. During the Bahmani dynasty, a daring Bhosle scaled what was regarded as an impregnable fort in the Konkan with the aid of an iguana or *ghorpad,* thus winning for himself and his descendants the new surname. Among the Maratha captains that hastened the destruction of the Moghul Empire after the death of Shivaji by demoralizing and defeating Aurangzeb's armies, the name of Santaji Ghorpade stands supreme. But the record of some of the Ghorpades of Mudhol was darkened by treachery and intrigue against their own countrymen. In the wars between Bijapur and Vijayanagar, the sword of Mudhol was always employed against the great Hindu empire. In 1520, Maloji, the ruler of Mudhol, laid down his life in one such conflict in an attempt to save that of his master, the Sultan. His son, Karansingh, out-heroded Herod by enthusiastically participating in the great coalition of the Muslim Powers of the Deccan that led to the destruction of the Vijayanagar Empire in 1565. The intrigues and machinations of Baji Ghorpade in Shivaji's time indicated the depth of degradation to which some of the members of the family had descended.

Indeed, selfishness, treachery and an abject submission to Muslim authority were the triple evils that dominated the careers of most of the Marathas before the advent of Shivaji. They were animated by no noble ambitions nor were they inspired by any high sense of purpose. Quick to take offence, they fought among themselves with bitter animosity, much to the advantage and delectation of their Muslim sovereigns. A mere rood of land, the headship of a petty village and an insult, real or imaginary, could set off the most murderous strife among the chieftains, while their principal concern ought to have been to unite and to strive for the restoration of the country's greatness. Grant Duff writes: "Neither national sentiment, nor unity of language and religion, prevented their fighting against each other. Not only did Mahratta subjects of these governments (namely, Bijapur, Ahmadnagar and Golkonda) stand in array opposed to each other, but the most active enmity was frequently evinced between members of the same family. They fought with rancour wherever individual dispute or hereditary feuds existed; and that spirit of rivalry in families, which was fomented by the kings of the Bahmani dynasty, was one means of keeping the Mahrattas poised against each other in the dynasties which succeeded them." The pestilential doctrine of divide and rule has always proved a potent instrument in the hands of aggressors to keep their subject peoples in a state of helplessness.

The Muslim rulers reaped a rich harvest from Maratha disunity in precisely the same manner as the British Government in India profited from Indian disunity in later centuries. By skilfully playing one Maratha chieftain against another, they insured and strengthened the loyalty of both factions to their own person and dynasty. Having thus secured the adhesion of these powerful but misguided men, they could play with impunity with the life and honour of individual Marathas, no matter how highly they were placed.

The extent of the internecine quarrels in Maharashtra is best illustrated by the uncompromising hostility that plagued the relations between the Jadhavs of Sindkhed and Shivaji's father and grandfather, although the two families had been united by the sacred ties of marriage. It was the certainty of the knowledge that no retribution would overtake him that the Nizamshah could summon courage to massacre treacherously such a powerful military leader as Lukhji Jadhavrao, his sons and his kinsmen on July 25, 1629. No Maratha raised his little finger in an attempt to compel the Sultan to atone for his crime. Shivaji's own father, the powerful Shahaji, could be imprisoned, humbled and humiliated with impunity by the Bijapur Sultan, despite the fact that the stability of the State depended in no small measure upon the sword-arm of the Maratha nobleman.

There cannot be a shadow of doubt that the unquestioning loyalty of the Marathas was ill-requited by their Muslim masters. Commenting on the "unattractive" story of the Bahmani dynasty, *the Oxford History of India* says : "Between 1347 and 1518 the throne was occupied by fourteen sultans, of whom four were murdered, and two others were deposed and blinded. With the exception of the fifth sultan, a quiet peaceful man, all the sovereigns who attained maturity were bloodthirsty fanatics. Humayun was a monster, comparable only with the most infamous tyrants named in history". Calling attention to the fact that the achievements of the dynasty were sterile, the same authority goes on to say : "The Bahmani sultans failed in the atrocious attempt made more than once by members of the dynasty to exterminate the population of the Hindu states of the Deccan, or in default of extermination to drive it by force into the fold of Islam". The author points out that, in spite of their mad orgy of murder and massacre, the rulers signally failed in their wicked purpose.

The record of the rulers of Ahmadnagar and Bijapur was certainly less sanguinary and some of them were in fact inspired by a genuinely broad and catholic outlook. For instance, in the counsels of Ibrahim Adilshah, the Hindus held a dominant position and his indulgence towards their faith won for him the somewhat flamboyant title of *Jagadguru* or "world-preceptor". Incidentally, Ibrahim's reign furnishes a significant example of how easy it was to win the gratitude and adulation of the Hindus who, in their debased condition. considered every trivial concession as the highest act of generosity.

The fickleness of their good fortune was, however, powerfully borne in upon the Hindus in the reign of Mahmud Adilshah when intolerance and oppression were again enthroned. Like the fanatical Sultans of Delhi, he adopted as his state policy grossly discriminatory measures against the Hindus who were prevented from holding high positions in his government. No Hindu could claim the right of equality with any Muslim, no matter what the status and the standing of the latter was and no matter how depraved and despicable the former happened to be. Among the duties prescribed for the *kazi* or judge was one of destroying and despoiling Hindu temples—a very honourable and meritorious function indeed! This "enlightened" monarch held sway during the rise of Shivaji.

None of the great Maratha families in the service of the Sultan—the Bhosles, the Nimbalkars, the Mores and the Ghorpades—ventured to protest against such calculated affront to their religion, honour and manhood. A Marathi author writes with evident indignation and bitterness that the Marathas of the time were only capable of fighting like game cocks among themselves and of readily perishing for their masters. They had in fact sold both their swords and their souls for a mess of pottage. It is useless to labour the point further. In all countries and climes and at all times, a prince without power is an object of contempt and derision. It could not be otherwise in India or Maharashtra. Shivaji succeeded in enforcing the payment of tribute to him by the kings of Bijapur, his father's overbearing overlords, and in treating the Sultan of Golkonda on terms of equality, besides winning the unstinted admiration of all who watched his achievements, entirely because he had acquired an irresistible power in order to compel compliance with his will.

Shivaji was born on April 6, 1627* in the hill-fort of Shivneri, overlooking the town of Junnar near Poona. Neither the state of the country nor the condition of his parents conduced to the child's growing in peace and security. His father, Shahaji, whose restless disposition drove him to change his masters from time to time, had made the wrong choice of championing the dying cause of Ahmadnagar, the destruction of which had become a major aim of Emperor Shah Jahan, who realized it in 1632. In order to avert it, Shahaji had set up a young prince of the Nizamshahi house as a *roi faineant* in the hope of administering the State himself, but his ambitious project was defeated by the superior resources of the Moghuls. Himself pursued by the enemy, he was unable to give protection to his wife, Jijabai, and her infant son, who, as members of his family, also incurred the displeasure of the commander of the imperial forces. Jijabai received little help from her powerful father, Lukhji Jadhavrao, who had now made common cause with the Moghuls. She suffered many privations and humiliations during her wanderings through dangerous and inhospitable regions in her desperate attempts to elude the Moghul troops. She was eventually caught and interned at Kondana or Sinhgad, the famous hill-fortress near Poona. She, however, successfully shielded her new-born child from the difficulties and dangers that surrounded her by concealing him in an unknown place like "a flame in a vessel".

The married life of Shahaji and Jijabai was not quite happy. Apart from the fact that he had taken another wife, which was, however, in perfect accord with the prevailing custom, there was an obvious incompatibility of temperament between the two. Jijabai was a sensitive and proud lady who had seen much at Ahmadnagar to cause her deep distress about the unhappy condition of her countrymen. The iron had entered her soul, following her harrowing experiences soon after Shivaji's birth. If a high-born and influential lady could not gain immunity from persecution, it was easy to imagine the plight of the common, defenceless people. Besides experiencing the imperious will of his wife, Shahaji could not escape the premonition that his son, when he came of age, would not be readily amenable to paternal discipline, except on his own impossible terms.

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* The actual date of Shivaji's birth is the subject of much learned debate and discussion. Whether he was born on the date indicated above or on February 19, 1630, as some authorities contend, the basic facts about his career and achievements remain unaffected.

When peace was restored in the Deccan, Shahaji entered the Bijapur service in October 1636. There, in the capital of his new master, he received ample evidence of his son's recalcitrance and spirit of rebellion. A growing lad of ten, Shivaji spent the most impressionable three years at the Adilshahi court, which, thanks to his precocity, gave him a valuable insight into the political system of the Muslim kingdom. Introduced to Mahmud Adilshah, he declined to make the traditional obeisance of servility, contenting himself with the manlier Maratha style of salutation. Perhaps, it required all the persuasive eloquence of Shahaji to pacify the irate Sultan and his mischievous courtiers, who regarded the advent of the new Maratha chieftain to the court as an unpardonable invasion of their own interests.

The city of Bijapur was large, well-populated and abounded in stately mansions and splendid tombs and mosques. There was wealth, luxury and refinement, but to the common folk these amenities were as remote as the stars in the sky. "Behind the splendid facade of the city's life," writes Dennis Kincaid, "the display of the courtiers 'insolent and stubborn and not easily bridled' and the apparently universal reverence shown to the Sultan ... there was a darker side to life in Bijapur. Apart from the violent tenor of life inevitable in such a society, it was obvious that the majority of the Sultan's Hindu subjects were oppressed intermittently but irritatingly."

In this city of splendour and barbarism, where "processions of execution were as frequent as processions of holiday and festival", Shivaji saw much that both instructed and repelled him. He saw how persistent attempts to impose the hegemony of the minority over the majority with the aid of intolerance and oppression had led to an almost irreconcilable estrangement between the two communities. He also saw how the noblest sons of the Maratha race prided themselves upon being privileged to place their heads on the foot-stool of the Sultan. Burning with anger, the mettlesome youth created a stir in the capital and gravely compromised his father's position by registering an open protest against cow slaughter. His spirited attack on the Muslim butchers was an unheard of occurrence in the city.

The parting of the ways between father and son came sooner than was probably anticipated by either. Shahaji, who was directed to proceed to the south on a military expedition, welcomed the opportunity to send his wife and son to Poona, the seat of his *jagir,* so that the youth might no longer implicate himself and his father by getting into new scrapes. Thenceforward the company of his father became rare and uncertain for Shivaji. He, therefore, began to lean heavily upon his mother whom he gradually raised to the pedestal of a deity. The ways of his father were indeed different. Shahaji was brave, chivalrous and generous to a fault. He was also a great patron of learning; indeed, he was endowed with all the gifts and abilities necessary for raising the standard of revolt. But he recoiled from that undertaking, seeking solace from the belief that he, at any rate, was not equipped to tempt fate. He, therefore, felt no uneasiness when drawing the sword against the remnants of the Vijayanagar Empire in the south. Nor did he allow himself to be roused to anger when the Bijapur armies plundered the great pilgrim centres in the south and carried away the rich booty to the capital. Shahaji was a valiant soldier, but unhappily he was not gifted with a wide-ranging mind. When he met his death by accident in January 1664, he had, however, the supreme satisfaction of seeing his son grow in power and glory as an independent sovereign.

The task of preparing Shivaji for his historic mission fell upon two outstanding persons. His mother, a woman of great perception and of masterful personality, decided that her son, in whom alone she now found the solace of her life, should not on any account seek a career for himself under a Muslim monarch. Like Euripides, she defined a slave as a man who had lost his liberty of thought, opinion and action. It was impossible that Shivaji should sink into ignoble anonymity by joining the crowd of enslaved *sardars* at the Muslim courts. He should be prepared for a truly noble and exalted task, namely, the liberation of Maharashtra and through it of India from the incubus of intolerance, oppression and misrule.

In this great undertaking, Jijabai was enthusiastically supported by Dadaji Konddev, the *kulkarni* of the village of Malthan, who was, in the words of Grant Duff, one of Shahaji's "most confidential men". Dadaji was much more than a village officer. He was shrewd, competent, industrious and, what was rare in his time, absolutely honest. The *jagir* extended from Junnar in the north to Wai in the south and "included Chakan, Supa, Baramati and Indapur as the principal Talukas".

Dadaji built a large house for the young *jagirdar* and his mother at Poona and set about improving the condition of the village which was then little better than an unhealthy and robber-infested place. He hunted down the wild animals that roamed in the region and restored law and order by firmly suppressing robbery and brigandage. The magnitude of the reform undertaken and accomplished by him and the blessing which it conferred on the people of the *jagir* is best illustrated by the following description of the lawlessness that had prevailed before he took charge of the estates. "To grow a crop." say Kincaid and Parasnis, "was merely to invite a troop of hostile cavalry to cut it and probably kill its owner. Nor was this the only danger. The invaders usually carried away with them the children of both sexes and the young women and forcibly converted them. Thanks to Dadaji's efficient management, confidence revived and more and more hillmen descended to the plains to till the lands that were offered to them on easy and attractive terms. Cultivation increased, and with it, prosperity returned to the *jagir*. Fruit trees were planted on an extensive scale, and the mangoes of Shivapur are still greatly prized in the district. Dadaji's personal rectitude became proverbial and made a profound impression upon the mind of his ward.

Great care was taken by Jijabai and the Brahmin tutor in preparing Shivaji for his responsibilities. He was taught history in order to make history. Dadaji was a learned man and showed great earnestness in painting before the young patriot an inspiring picture of India's ancient greatness, her spiritual and material splendour and her monumental achievements. He described to the wondering lad the heritage of the country, as portrayed in its great religious and literary works, including the Epics, the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana.* Arjuna, the incomparable archer, and Bhima, the club-wielding Hercules of the Epics, were held before Shivaji as exemplars of ancient India's brave and skilful warriors. The virtues of Dharmaraja were explained to him to prove that truth and goodness would always prevail when judiciously supported by strength.

The *Ramayana* also became an enthralling theme for Dadaji's discourse:

And 'tis told by ancient sages, during Rama's happy reign,
Death untimely, dire diseases, came not to his subject men;
Widows wept not in their sorrow for their lords untimely lost,
Mothers wailed not in their anguish for their babes by Yama
    crost;
Robbers, cheats and gay deceivers tempted not with lying word
Neighbour loved his righteous neighbour, and the people
    loved their lord,
Trees their ample produce yielded as returning seasons went,
And the earth in grateful never-failing harvest lent.
Rains descended in their season, never came the blighting gale,
Rich in crop and rich in pasture was each soft and smiling vale,
Loom and anvil gave their produce, and the tilled and fertile
    soil,
And the nation lived rejoicing in their old ancestral toil.

This is utopia *par excellence*, but the receptive mind of Shivaji accepted it as a feasible goal. At any rate, it was perfectly within the region of possibility to rescue Maharashtra from the vale of tears. Besides these heart-warming stories, he was instructed in the simple wisdom embodied in the sayings and songs of the saints of Maharashtra. In short, all the latent impulses in the young man were roused to active consciousness by reminding him of India's past greatness and of her present prostrate condition.

In addition to the training of the mind and the intellect, Shivaji was taught all the accomplishments necessary for the profession of arms. Perhaps the most significant part of his education was the opportunity presented to him to learn invaluable lessons from the book of life. As part of the practical training of the young man in the administration of the *jagir*, Dadaji often took him to different parts of the fief during his tours of inspection. What he saw and heard during these visits was a great revelation to Shivaji. He soon developed a passionate attachment to the country around the Sahyadri hills known as Maval and its hardy inhabitants called Mavlas. The unadorned beauty of nature, represented by the rugged and tree-clad hills and valleys, exercised an irresistible fascination on him. Not only on the occasion of Dadaji's tours, but independently and more often, he ran to the hills around Poona and held long and intimate communion with nature. He saw with the eye of a born military leader that no terrain could offer better scope for the Parthian methods of warfare. He wandered widely but purposefully in the wilderness and became familiar with every nook and corner and every glade and thicket of the forests. The hills and valleys unfolded their secrets to the diligent explorer whose wanderings, besides hardening his body, inspired him with lofty resolutions.

Shivaji evinced a sincere and spontaneous affection and admiration for the humble hill-folk, whose rough exterior, he realized, merely screened their sterling qualities. They were brave, loyal, hardy, hospitable and industrious. Despite their poverty and subjection to unjust government, they had not abandoned the old virtues of rustic simplicity, of honest toil, and of unaffected devotion to their ancestral faith. With such inestimable qualities in them, it was possible to organise them into an irresistible force and to win great causes. "Shivaji," says Grant Duff, "was always partial to the Mavlis" because he observed that "they were active and intelligent in anything to which they had been accustomed, and remarkably faithful in situations of trust."

The earnestness of Shivaji and his attractive personality fascinated young and old that came near him. To the old beards, from whom he heard harrowing tales of suffering and humiliation, he confided the hopeful message of early deliverance. It was a period of anxiety and uncertainty, but the wise men of the villages soon discovered in the young master a true incarnation of courage and fortitude. They readily assured him of their own co-operation and that of their sons in his crusade for national independence.

To the young men in particular the attraction of Shivaji's personality was irresistible. Though the son of a nobleman, his democratic attitude, his affability, and his spirit of comradeship won for him the undying loyalty of the flower of Maharashtra's manhood. Gomaji Naik Panasambal, Yesaji Kank, Tanaji Malusare, Baji Pasalkar and Bajirao Jedhe were among his earliest adherents. Some of these men enjoyed much prestige and influence in their villages and their adhesion to Shivaji's cause gave a great fillip to the patriotic movement.

A shrewd judge of men and things, Dadaji clearly foresaw the coming events and inwardly rejoiced at his protege's noble inclinations. The old Brahmin, however, owed a responsibility to Shahaji and shrank from the risk of being accused of negligence in the performance of his duties or of conniving at what an adherent of the *status quo* would undoubtedly have regarded as the growing intransigence and "disloyalty" of Shivaji. Even so, his protests to the young man were mild and were merely intended to ensure that Shahaji was not implicated by his son's adventures.

For his part, Shivaji was careful not to embarrass Dadaji and regulated his conduct accordingly, without at the same time compromising with any of his cherished principles. The old and trusted friend of the family died on March 7, 1647 which released the fledgling genius from all unnecessary constraints, his future course of action being guided almost entirely by the exigencies of the situations that confronted him from time to time. Besides, he was fortified in his resolution by the benedictions of the dying man who, to quote Grant Duff, "advised him to prosecute his plans of independence; to protect Brahmins, kine, and cultivators; to preserve the temples of the Hindus from violation; and to follow the fortune which lay before him".

It was impossible for Shivaji to adopt any other course. Apart from the dying wish of his respected benefactor, his own inclinations were strongly in favour of striving for an independent career. "There seems to be little doubt," says Rawlinson, "that Shivaji grew up with a genuine sense of a mission — that his career was inspired by a real desire to free his country from what he considered to be a foreign tyranny." Moreover, his mother's firm conviction about the need for establishing a new polity in the country through his instrumentality admitted of no doubt or vacillation on his part in the choice of his career.

Apart from these considerations, everyone of which was weighty; the situation in the country clinched the issue. In Bijapur, to which his father had pledged his loyalty, a tyrant and a bigot was on the throne. Sir Jadunath Sarkar draws attention to a Muslim authority's detailed description of the unbridled oppression of the Hindus by Mahmud Adilshah as a deliberate State policy. Besides, "the inconsistency, intrigue and bloodshed which stained the court of Bijapur" were the most decisive deterrents to Shivaji's acceptance of service under its Government. "I have seen," declared Bismarck, "three kings naked and the sight was not always a pleasant one!" The sight of a single nude sovereign was evidently too much for Shivaji!

A career in the Moghul Empire was fraught with even graver consequences. "The imperialists," to quote Sarkar again, "had killed Kheloji Bhosle, his uncle, and their superior resources and organization made it unlikely for the Hindus of the Deccan to enjoy greater toleration or power under them than under the weaker and smaller sultanates close at hand". Shivaji, therefore, gladly responded to the natural bent of his mind and took the solemn decision to draw the sword in the cause of independence, depending for his success on the righteousness of his undertaking and the spontaneous support of his people.

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CHAPTER 3

THE FORMIDABLE ANTAGONISTS

SHIVAJI was a mere stripling when he embarked upon his great career of conquest. His ambition and his audacity were indeed amazing. The son of a *Sardar,* whose strength and status depended entirely upon his unflagging devotion and loyalty to the throne of Bijapur, chose to uproot the most firmly entrenched Muslim rule in India. The resources of the Deccan *jagir* of Shahaji, from where his son launched his campaign for independence, were pitifully inadequate for raising armies or for waging wars of long duration. Many who failed to grasp the moral and spiritual significance of the movement, wondered whether Shivaji had not in fact set out to achieve the impossible. His attempt, they thought, was like an anthill seeking to measure its absurd height with that of the towering Himalayas!

They were not wrong in their forebodings. Ranged against the young patriot was the kingdom of Bijapur which was still at the height of its power and glory. Even more formidable was the Moghul Empire which, under the government of Shah Jahan, the grand monarch, had attained the pinnacle of strength and splendour. It was indeed the noon of Moghul imperialism in India. Shivaji's war of independence was, however, begun, not against the Moghuls, but against his neighbour, Bijapur. The resources of this Muslim State in the Deccan, though not comparable with those of the imperialists, were formidable enough to crush any rising power in its neighbourhood. The realm of the Adilshah was in fact the largest and the most powerful among the surviving Sultanates of the Deccan. Its annual revenue in 1656 totalled nearly eight crores of rupees, besides Rs. 5¼ crores received from its feudatories. It was defended by a large and well-equipped army consisting of 80,000 cavalry, 250,000 infantry and 530 war elephants. Such were the mighty powers with whom Shivaji decided to measure his strength.

Shivaji took the first step towards independence unobtrusively in 1646 by gaining possession of Torna, a hill-fort "exceedingly difficult of access", situated twenty miles south-west of Poona. While reconstructing the fortress, he discovered a treasure-trove which, containing two lakh *hons,* furnished him with the much-prized sinews of war. He welcomed the find as auguring well for his cause and used part of the treasure in equipping his adherents with arms and ammunition. The bulk of it was, however, employed in the construction of another fort on the crest of the same mountain called Morbad. He gave the new hill-fort the name of Rajgad. The task of building the fort was entrusted to Moro Pingle who showed considerable engineering skill in making it an impregnable stronghold. Rajgad became the capital of Shivaji's kingdom for many years till Rairi, rebuilt and renamed as Raigad, won this honour.

The revolution, though silently started in a sequestered part of the country, did not fail to attract the attention of the Bijapur Government, although Mahmud Adilshah, who held sway over a large kingdom, was not unduly perturbed by the initial activities of Shivaji. It is, however, evident from the Sultan's letter to a local baron that the young Maratha's adventure was by no means overlooked by his father's master. Shivaji's clever explanation of his action, which he defended on the plausible ground that he was a far more zealous protector of the Sultan's interests than his venal, lazy and inefficient officers, appears to have satisfied the distant Government and the *amour propre* of its head. A judicious distribution of gold at the court also played some part in allowing him freedom to pursue his conquests.

Shivaji's exploits soon became popular among the Marathas who swelled the ranks of his followers in ever-increasing numbers. An outstanding man to champion his cause was Phirangoji Narsala, the valiant commander of the strategically important fort of Chakan on the Poona-Nasik road. The example of Phirangoji, whose prestige and influence in the district were great, was followed by many other officers, young and old, all of whom swore unswerving loyalty to their new master.

Perhaps Shivaji's most important acquisition at this time was the surrender of the famous fort of Kondana to him by its Muslim commander. Situated about twelve miles immediately south of Poona, Kondana has become famous in history as the scene of the most stirring and heroic deeds. Its strategic importance has been well stated by Kincaid and Parasnis who write: "Whoever held Kondana, dominated not only the Muta valley but the Poona plain as far as Chakan." The name of the fortress was appropriately changed to Sinhgad or Lion Fort after its transfer to Maratha hands.

In 1648 Shivaji gained control over Purandar, another celebrated hill-fort of Maharashtra and probably even more stupendous than the Lion Fort. Lying eighteen miles from Poona and to the south-east of Sinhgad, the fortress of Purandar was under the command of a Brahmin called Nilkanth Sarnaik who held his charge under the Bijapur Government. Nilkanth was known in the neighbourhood as a man of stern and sombre rectitude. He had caused his wife to be blown to pieces from the cannon's mouth for provoking his fiery temper. The death of this extraordinary person gave rise to a dispute over the succession among his sons. Bijapur was distant and its decisions were notoriously dilatory. Shivaji, whose star had by now begun to rise, was invited to arbitrate. The importance of the fortress and its value to his scheme of things, decided him to place the common cause above the interests of the factious brothers. The wisdom of his disposition was fully confirmed by subsequent events. The family of Sarnaiks remained steadfast in their loyalty to the Maratha Empire till its dissolution, while his control over the fort gave Shivaji immeasurable strength in facing his formidable enemies.

Shivaji thus steadily advanced towards his goal by employing every means within his scope. He combined adroit diplomacy with an eloquent appeal to patriotism, both of which were occasionally supported by force. The end was indeed the paramount consideration and nothing could deflect him from his resolution to reach it. He gave early proofs of the inflexibility of his determination by surprising an elderly but hostile kinsman in his own town and sending him away to distant Bangalore. Sambhaji Mohite was the commander of the Supa Petha. He obstinately refused to make common cause with Shivaji, although the entire neighbourhood had proclaimed its adhesion to the young man's movement. There was evidently no place in resurgent Maharashtra for a man of Mohite's outmoded outlook and he was accordingly despatched to Shahaji, his brother-in-law.

By gaining control over the important forts around Poona, which stood sentinel to his new territory, Shivaji began to function, not as his father's deputy or as an agent of the Bijapur Sultan, but as a prince in his own right. He now stretched his gaze beyond his modest realm, "watching and crouching," as Grant Duff has so expressively put it, "like the wily tiger of his own mountain-valleys, until he has stolen into a situation from which he could at once spring on his prey".

The tiger had not long to wait. From the outset, Shivaji had organized an admirable intelligence service. He had taken in his pay a number of able and energetic men who roamed far beyond his own territories and sent him accurate and up-to-date information about all important happenings in the country. Thus apprised, he was able to make careful preparations for meeting any critical situation with the thoroughness of a man who has been forewarned of coming events. One day, his scouts brought him news that a large treasure was on its way from Kalyan, then as now an important town at the head of the Bombay creek, to Bijapur to relieve the financial embarrassment of the Sultan's Government. The route of the convoy was through the rugged hills of Maharashtra and it would have been the height of unwisdom on the part of Shivaji not to annex such a great prize.

He made careful preparations to intercept the convoy and to capture the treasure by surprising the guards. The Marathas fell upon the Bijapur troops as the convoy was laboriously negotiating a difficult ascent along a mountain pass and gained possession of the treasure by killing or dispersing the Sultan's soldiers. The loss of life in the skirmish on Shivaji's side was negligible, but the families of the men that fell in action were generously rewarded, while the wounded were suitably looked after and provided for. Shivaji had no illusions about the consequences of his open defiance of the Bijapur Government and in order to gather more strength for consolidating his position, he made a surprise attack on the forts in the vicinity of Kalyan and annexed as many as nine of them to his territory. More important among these acquisitions were Lohgad, Rajmachi and Rairi. Rajmachi is a stupendous fortified hill at the foot of the Bhor pass, while Rairi eventually won the distinction of becoming Shivaji's capital, as much on account of its natural strength as because of its accessibility to the plains of the Konkan and the mountainous regions of Maharashtra. The traveller from Poona to Bombay can see the lofty fortress of Lohgad, with the sister hill-fort of Visapur, perched on the heights of the Bhor Ghat.

While Shivaji was making these important conquests, one of his officers made a surprise attack on Kalyan and captured it. Kalyan was the seat of the Muslim Governor of the Bijapur Government and, besides being a prosperous port, was the chief "point of departure for the numerous pilgrim-ships plying between Western India and Mecca". At this time, the office of Governor was held by an Arab foreigner called Mulla Ahmad, one of the leading nobles of Bijapur. His administration was lax and unpopular and a change in the government was heartily welcomed by the people. "The capture of Kalyan," says Professor H. G. Rawlinson, "was the signal for a general uprising. The people were tired of Mahommedan misgovernment, and Shivaji prudently established Dadaji's wise revenue system in each of his fresh acquisitions. Fort after fort opened its gates and the Konkan, as far as the border of Sawantwadi, was soon in the hands of the Marathas." The Government of the new province was placed in charge of Abaji Sondev, a trusted officer of the Maratha State.

Many pleasant episodes have been recorded in the annals of Maharashtra to illustrate Shivaji's abounding generosity, his innate goodness and his sense of rectitude when dealing with women. It was customary for Mulla Ahmad, the dispossessed Governor, to spend most of his time away from his charge in order to be close to his sovereign at Bijapur. When Shivaji conquered Kalyan, the family of Mulla Ahmad fell into the hands of the Marathas. The young daughter-in-law of the Muslim nobleman, a woman of striking beauty, was sent to Shivaji. The great Maratha rose as the lady was brought into his presence and, bowing to her graciously, complimented her on her charming appearance, exclaiming: "How I wish that my mother had been as beautiful as you are! I would then have been more handsome!" The assembled persons were dumbfounded at the spectacle. By his simple and soft-spoken words, addressed to a captured lady, Shivaji proclaimed his firm adherence to the noble policy of respecting women, no matter to which religion or country or station in life they belonged.

To give another example of Shivaji's large-heartedness during his expedition around Kalyan, he captured Prabalgad, near Panvel, then under the control of a Bijapur officer called Kesari Singh. The commandant was killed in action and his family sought refuge in a corner of the fort, fearing that the Maratha leader would put them to the sword. When the report of their panic and distress was brought to Shivaji's notice, he promptly went to the place where the mother and other members of Kesari Singh's family had taken shelter and prostrated himself before the lady as a token of his respect for her. Despite her grief, the woman was mollified by his kindly behaviour and was sent back to her village in a palanquin, loaded with riches and with a liberal provision for the surviving members of the family. The mortal remains of the dead captain were consigned to the flames according to the prescribed rites and with all the honours due to a valiant foe. Such examples of Shivaji's sense of fair play and generosity towards his adversaries greatly increased his reputation as a high-principled and humane conqueror.

Bijapur was now roused to a fuller realization of the magnitude of the peril that threatened it from Maharashtra. But there was no change in the imbecility of the court which clung to the absurd belief that a great movement, deriving its strength and sanctions from popular support, could be smothered by wielding the simple but despicable weapon of reprisals. The advisers of Mahmud Adilshah deluded their monarch with the suggestion that Shivaji could be reduced to submission by arresting and threatening the life of his father.

Decadent governments, with premonitions of their impending doom, commit the most unpardonable blunders in a desperate attempt to save themselves from dissolution. Shahaji had rendered distinguished military services to Bijapur and had helped it to carry arms deep into the south. Besides losing his eldest son in one of the southern campaigns, he had, with the resignation of a fatalist, accepted his subordinate status almost as a divine dispensation. This man, who had dedicated the best part of his chequered career to the advancement of his Muslim rulers' cause, was unceremoniously arrested on August 6, 1648 by the commander-in-chief of the Bijapur army which was then engaged in investing the famous Jinji fort in the district of South Arcot. The details of the part played by Baji Ghorpade, the chief of Mudhol, in this sordid affair are not unclear, but the fact of his collusion with Shahaji's captors is undoubted. The proud Maratha nobleman was sent in chains to Bijapur as if he was a common felon.

Shivaji was in a dilemma since further inroads into the Bijapur territory would undoubtedly have sealed the fate of his father. But the edifice of independence he had built with such patience and foresight could not be allowed to be destroyed for any personal reasons, however weighty they might be. He took counsel with his mother and the wise men around him, but opinion was divided. Eventually, he decided to appeal to the Great Moghul to intercede with the Bijapur Darbar on his behalf. He offered to serve the Empire with distinction if his prayer was granted.

The weight of evidence disproves the general belief that Shahaji's release was accomplished through Shah Jahan's intervention. Sarkar categorically discounts it by maintaining that the Emperor "always treated Muhammad Adil Shah with marked courtesy and kindness, while Shahaji was bitterly hated at the Mughal Court for the trouble he had given them in 1633-1636". It is, however, possible that the Bijapur Government belatedly realized the monumental folly of humiliating and punishing a powerful officer without any evidence to establish his guilt. Shahaji's Muslim friends at the court must also have played their part in hastening his release and in the restoration of his property and military contingent.

The reconciliation between the Sultan and his *Sardar* was perhaps complete. Years later, on May 26, 1658, Ali Adilshah, the son and successor of the guilty monarch, assured Shahaji of his complete confidence in him and promised not to inflict any vicarious punishment on him for the "disloyalty and audacity" of his son, Shivaji. The *Sardar* was exhorted to serve the Bijapur throne with his customary zeal and devotion, rejoicing in the knowledge that his sovereign and master would not entertain any allegations and calumnies against him in future.

Shivaji did not, however, forget the affront to his illustrious father. No special act of retaliation was necessary against the Bijapur Government since the whole purpose and significance of his career was to overrun it. But the Maratha chieftains who refused to countenance his grand project and, what is worse, who missed no opportunity in their attempts to defeat it, deserved special attention. Notable among such misguided noblemen was Chandrarao More of Javli, about whom a brief reference has already been made in an earlier chapter.

The Mores were men of great influence who had acquired large territories around Mahableshwar and accumulated a vast amount of wealth by an unashamed policy of appeasement and subservience to the Sultans of Bijapur. They refused to see the signs of the times or to note the ferment that had begun to change the minds of the people and determine them to oppose misrule and religious persecution. With Mores, as with other *Sardars,* loyalty to the Bijapur *Raj* had become an obsession and a disease of the soul. Nothing could move their hearts and nothing could convince them about the paramount need for destroying the iniquitous *status quo.* Their most ambitious and exalted aim was to serve the Sultan with undeviating loyalty and to strive for their own advancement. In pursuit of this two-fold objective, they were prepared to sacrifice any principle. Chandrarao gave shelter and facilities to Baji Shamraj, who had been sent by the Bijapur king with a large force to capture Shivaji by fair or foul means. The fact that the designs of the treacherous foe were frustrated by Shivaji did not diminish the enormity of the guilt of Chandrarao who deserved condign punishment for so flagrantly violating the obligations of a neighbour to the great liberator.

Nevertheless, with exemplary patience and perseverance, Shivaji attempted to cure the Mores of their warped mentality. He tried to convince them of the paramount necessity of establishing a system of government that ensured religious freedom and promoted the welfare of the people. He pointed out the injustice of a dispensation which condemned the real producers of wealth and prosperity to the status of serfs so that their masters could with impunity abandon themselves to luxury and indolence and saunter away their lives in secluded places, refusing to recognize that there existed an entity called the common man.

It took years for Shivaji to realize that the Mores were least susceptible to the promptings of patriotism. After all, you cannot make silk purses out of a sow's ears! Only the argument of force could wean them from their selfish and suicidal course. Shivaji accordingly took the deliberate decision to destroy the Mores by any means. Being in possession of Javli, they held a key position which effectively prevented his expansion in the south and south-west. All the leading men in the area, such as Kanhoji Jedhe and Haibatrao Silimkar, were Shivaji's enthusiastic supporters and it was impossible to allow the common cause to suffer merely because a misguided chieftain, obstinately refused to abandon his selfishness. "The State of Javli", says Sarkar, "by its position, barred the path of Shivaji's expansion in the south and south-west. Chandrarao thwarted Shivaji's policy of drawing the various Mavli headmen to his side, and tried to form in that locality an anti-Shivaji coalition in concert with the neighbouring Adil Shahi governor, because the progress of Shivaji in that region would have naturally led to the loss of More's power and independence."

Shivaji, therefore, decided that there should be no Mores at Javli. He entrusted the task of encompassing their end to Raghunath Ballal Korde and Sambhaji Kavji, two of his trusted comrades, who overran Javli with complete success. Most of the leading members of the More family were killed, while their large accumulations of wealth were confiscated. Shivaji himself promptly moved into the town and, in January 1656, annexed the important and extensive principality to his own government. His gain in prestige and resources was immense. The conquest gave him control over "all the twelve Mavals from Junnar to Wai," while the hardy hillmen and the intellectuals of the region supplied soldiers to his army and administrators to his government. Another notable achievement of Shivaji on this occasion was the adhesion of Baji Prabhu, the *deshpande* of Javli, to his cause. The heroic sacrifice of this man in defence of his new master will be described in a later chapter.

Shivaji built a fort on the crest of the hill commanding the valley of the famous Parghat and appropriately gave the new stronghold the name of Pratapgad, which, in less than four years after its construction, became the scene of his historic encounter with Afzal Khan. The fort was built by Moropant Pingle who gave much care to ensure its impregnability. The Javli episode furnished one more proof to the people of Maharashtra that Shivaji's government was not a fleeting phenomenon but an abiding fact of history.

The retribution that overtook Baji Ghorpade of Mudhol was no less terrible. In pliancy and subservience to the Bijapur throne, the Ghorpades of Mudhol were the equals of Mores, and, as we saw earlier, one of their ancestors had won notoriety by fighting energetically on the side of the Muslim coalition against the Vijayanagar Empire in the famous battle of Rakshasa-Tangadi. Baji Ghorpade had forfeited all claims for considerate treatment at the hands of Shivaji on account of the assistance he had rendered in the arrest and humiliation of Shahaji and the hilitary aid he had given to the enemy when the fort of Panhala in which he, Shivaji, had taken shelter in 1660 was being closely invested by the Bijapur troops under the command of Jauhar. Deeply offended by the perfidy of his own kinsman, Shahaji had secretly exhorted his son to wreak a terrible vengeance on Baji Ghorpade. Shivaji's pre-occupations had long prevented him from giving his attention to Mudhol both for settling his own accounts with its chief and for fulfilling his filial obligations to his parent.

In November 1664 Shivaji suddenly struck a heavy blow at Mudhol whose ruler had committed many other aggressions during the intervening years. The fact that Baji was his cousin did not deter him from punishing the man in the only manner he deserved. The capital, Mudhol, was attacked with great severity and the vaults of the Raja, which contained large treasures, were thoroughly sacked. Baji courageously faced Shivaji and was slain in the encounter. It was an unhappy episode which caused deep distress to him. He installed the slain Raja's son, Maloji, on the *gadi* and returned to his stronghold, taking comfort from the knowledge that one more implacable opponent to his great cause had at last been removed.

By investing the son of Baji with the ruling powers Shivaji demonstrated that annexation was not his motive in invading Mudhol. Nor did he desire to perpetuate the suicidal feud between the two great Maratha families and proved the sincerity of his wish for reconciliation by writing cordially to the new ruler. The letter, addressed to Maloji years after this event, recalled the part played by Baji in securing the arrest of Shahaji and the bitter animosity which it had aroused between the two families. "The time has arrived," Shivaji declared, "when we should draw a veil over the unpleasant past and re-establish our relations on a basis of mutual affection and regard."

The eventful career of Shivaji abounds in episodes, portraying his remarkable courage and resourcefulness and his uncanny ability to emerge victorious from the most difficult and dangerous situations. But, among his personal exploits, nothing strikes the imagination so vividly as his defeat and destruction of the powerful Afzal Khan, his night attack on Shaista Khan, the premier nobleman of the Moghul Empire, and his celebrated escape from the imperial city of Agra.

Shivaji's growing fame, power and popularity deeply offended and alarmed Bijapur which, after attempting various futile methods to encompass his ruin, finally decided to send a powerful military expedition against him. Following the death of Mohmud Adilshah in November 1656, the administration of the Sultanate was vested in his widow Badi Sahiba, a dominating and self-opinionated woman. She governed the State on behalf of her young son, Ali Adilshah, and strove with much determination to regain the lost territories of the realm. She realized that no half measures could stop the extension of Shivaji's sovereignty and, therefore, decided to send a strong army against him.

But the task was not an easy one. Few among the generals of Bijapur showed any enthusiasm to undertake the perilous mission. The great military talent of Shivaji, his formidable capacity to launch a counter-attack, and the advantage derived by him from the lie of the land from which he operated, were among the major factors that deterred the Bijapur commanders from readily agreeing to proceed against him. At last, Abdullah Bhatari, surnamed Afzal Khan, consented to invade Maharashtra.

The Khan was in every way qualified to lead the expedition. He was a Titan in physical strength and had graduated in all the arts of diplomacy and deceitfulness. On many previous occasions he had made the most intimidating display of his ability to practise treachery and savagery. In 1639 he had faithlessly murdered Kasturi Ranga, the Raja of Sera, while engaged in parleys with him as the chief's host. He had committed a similar crime in November 1657 by murdering Wazir Khan Muhammad. It was the same sinister man to whom the person of Shahaji had been entrusted during the latter's journey from the south to Bijapur as a captive.

Indeed, Afzal Khan was no ordinary adversary. He was a front rank noble at the court and, as a general, he was of the "highest standing" in the Bijapur kingdom. His record in the campaigns against the Moghuls and in the south was brilliant. Great preparations were made to ensure his success against Shivaji and nothing was left to chance. He was given an army consisting of ten thousand cavalry, besides artillery, transport and all other military equipment. In their prowess the men that accompanied him were among the best and in fact belonged to a fighting force that had often humbled the imperial armies. Their weapons too were among the best that the age could produce. In the first and fateful encounter with the infant State of Maharashtra no precaution was overlooked in order to make sure that victory was not denied to the invading army.

Nevertheless, there was an under-current of anxiety both at the court and in the heart of the Khan about the outcome of the contest. The Dowager Queen was especially overcome by grim fears and forebodings and instructed the Khan to strive for the capture or murder of Shivaji by "pretending friendship with him". A contemporary record of the episode, written by an Englishman on December 10, 1659, makes it abundantly clear that in the expedition against Shivaji the rulers of Bijapur clearly and unequivocally meditated treachery, besides the use of overwhelming force. Revington, the Englishman who wrote from Rajapur, says: "Against Shivaji the Queen this year sent Abdullah Khan with an army of 10,000 horse and foot, and because she knew with that strength he was not able to resist Shivaji, she counselled him to pretend friendship with his enemy, which he did". Shivaji, who was fully apprised of the Khan's antecedents, prepared himself to meet any contingency.

Afzal Khan began his journey to Maharashtra in September 1659. If tradition can be trusted, before leaving the capital he put to the sword his numerous wives as the only means of ensuring their chastity since he could not be certain that he would emerge victorious or alive from the ensuing trial of strength with Shivaji. The gruesome episode is a true measure of the truculence and savagery of which he was capable. The witlessness of the man was indeed as massive and towering as were his cruelty and treachery. "The Bijapur general," says Sarkar, "had accepted the command in a spirit of bravado" and had in fact boasted in open court that he would bring Shivaji to the capital without even condescending to dismount from his horse!

Brave words do not always have their counterpart in action. During his progress on the journey Afzal Khan committed revolting crimes against the religion of the people. He first marched to Pandharpur where he desecrated the famous shrine of Vithoba, the deity that had inspired generations of saints and savants to compose and sing stirring songs in praise of God and to preach the abiding oneness of mankind. The Khan inflicted similar indignities on the Hindu faith by defiling many other famous temples and showed his utter contempt for the religious feelings of the people by singling out Tuljapur for an unbridled display of his image-breaking ecstasy. Goddess Bhawani was the guardian deity of Shivaji. The image was removed from the shrine, broken to pieces and then pounded to dust in a grinding-stone! Retribution for such calculated acts of vandalism and desecration was inevitable.

Shivaji watched the excesses of the Khan with indignation, but he was too prudent to take any rash or false step. He moved to the lofty fortress of Pratapgad from where he could meditate in safety on the counter-measures that would end the invader's career of conquest and spoliation. The Khan marched to Wai and encamped there in order to be near Shivaji. Wai had earlier been the seat of his satrapy, and his governorship of the province from 1649 to 1654 had given him much useful knowledge and insight into the state of the country and the temper of its inhabitants.

During his residence at Wai Afzal Khan had successfully dissuaded Chandrarao More from making common cause with Shivaji by offering him every encouragement to reject the latter's overtures. Indeed, it had been his special responsibility as the

Governor of Wai to destroy the infant State of Maharashtra and towards this end, he had actively instigated all the dissident elements in the area to take up arms against Shivaji. More's intransigence in his relations with Shivaji was in no small measure due to the Khan's connivance. On the present occasion, too, he made persistent attempts to stir up local disaffection against Shivaji, but his insolence and intolerance and the growing realization by the people of Maharashtra of the true significance of Shivaji's aims and ideals robbed his intrigues of much of their effectiveness.

The Khan spurned no weapon in his atempts to ensnare Shivaji. He wrote a seemingly conciliatory letter to the latter and despatched it to Pratapgad with Krishnaji Bhaskar, the *kulkarni* of Wai, whom he employed as his envoy. The letter read: "Your father has long been a great friend of mine and you are, therefore, no stranger to me. Come and see me and I shall use my influence to make the Adil Shah confirm your possession of the Konkan and the forts you now hold. I shall secure for you further distinctions and military equipment from our Government. If you wish to attend the Court, you will be welcomed. Or, if you want to be excused personal attendance there, you will be exempted."

Shivaji deeply reflected on the implications of Afzal Khan's invitation. He could see that the Khan's offer of friendship was a mere delusion and a snare, but the danger of its rejection was as great as its acceptance. His submission to Bijapur would most certainly have ended his career as an independent prince and destroyed the deeply-cherished hopes and aspirations of the people of the land for a government that guaranteed liberty of conscience, besides striving for their welfare. Moreover, if he abandoned his mission at the most crucial stage of its fulfilment, posterity would undoubtedly brand him as an adventurer who, at the first encounter with a really formidable enemy, chose the easier and cowardly course of submission and surrender, thus preferring ignoble safety to a distinguished place in the history of his motherland.

He took counsel with his mother, Jijabai, and with some of his intimate companions in whose wisdom he had great confidence. They pondered long and deeply but could offer no unanimous advice. The magnitude of the peril and their attachment for Shivaji clouded the judgment of some of his advisers who urged that there should be no meeting between him and the treacherous Khan.

It was perhaps good that such divided counsel gave Shivaji an invaluable opportunity to make his own decision and thus rise to the full stature of his masterful personality. A man of deep religious convictions who was guided on all critical occasions in his career by an intuition that, as subsequent events fully justified, never failed him, he sought through prayers light and guidance for his future course of action. Very soon his doubts and fears were dismissed and he took the manly decision to face the Khan. His mother, who had consistently encouraged him to face the peril boldly, rejoiced at the fulfilment of her own desire and heartily blessed him in his undertaking.

Shivaji's plan was simple. It was, of course, impossible for him to go to Bijapur. He should, therefore, employ all his persuasive eloquence and blandishments in order to induce Afzal Khan to return empty-handed. If such a manoeuvre failed and if war became inevitable, the invaders should be forced to give battle in a place of Shivaji's own choice. It was a well-considered plan and no effort was spared to secure the Khan's approval. Meanwhile, secret orders were sent to the Maratha armies, stationed in the Konkan and the Ghats, to proceed in the direction of Pratapgad and take post in its vicinity. They were commanded by seasoned officers like Moropant Pingle, Netaji Palkar and Kanhoji Jedhe.

With his line of action settled, Shivaji wrote a cordial reply to Afzal Khan whose protestations of friendship and regard for him and his father were acknowledged with gratitude. The letter conveyed his anxiety to meet the great commander, not only to give proof of his esteem for him, but also to seek the Khan's sage advice about his own future career. It was, of course, impossible for him to cast doubts on the *bona fides* of his benefactor, but unfortunately his self-confidence and courage failed him at the thought of meeting the great man in his armed camp. Would he, therefore, condescend to proceed to Pratapgad and accept his humble hospitality? Every arrangement would be made for his reception on a scale appropriate to his eminence. The letter served its purpose admirably. Afzal Khan suppressed his initial apprehensions about the wisdom of meeting his adversary on his own ground by fletching his iron muscles and comparing his own enormous physical strength with the small build of Shivaji. The great dissembler was hoist with his own petard!

Shivaji's carefully worded and diplomatic reply was sent to Afzal Khan with Krishnaji Bhaskar who was accompanied on his return journey to Wai by Pantaji Gopinath, a man of keen perception and sound judgment. It was the task of the clever Brahmin, who acted as Shivaji's agent in the negotiations, to divine the mind of the Khan and, by an astute display of eloquence and earnestness, persuade the Bijapur general to agree to meet his principal at Pratapgad. Shivaji took the additional precaution of sending with the party Viswasrao Nanaji, an expert spy, who, assuming various guises, was able to collect useful intelligence about the Bijapur military camp. During his secret interviews with the Khan's envoy, Krishnaji Bhaskar, Shivaji had gained sufficient knowledge about the Khan's evil intentions. His impressions were fully confirmed by his agent, Pantaji, who, by a liberal recourse to bribes, learnt from high authority that Afzal Khan "had so arranged matters that Shivaji would be arrested at the interview, as he was too cunning to be caught by open fight". But it was the Brahmin's greatest achievement that he succeeded in inducing the Khan to fall in with Shivaji's pre-concerted plan.

The stage was now set for the historic encounter. The jungle was cleared and a road made from Wai to the foot of Pratapgad for the movement of the Bijapur army. Food, water and recreation of the choicest kind were arranged in profusion at different places along the entire route to relieve the tedium of the journey. The Khan and his men were supremely happy at the excellence and the cordiality of the reception. Meanwhile, with great discernment Shivaji selected the crest of an eminence below the fort of Pratapgad as the site for conferring with the Khan.

Visitors to the fort and the place where the two men met can only gain a faint idea of the frightening character of the terrain as it was three hundred years ago. To-day a modern motorable road leads the traveller to the foot of the fortress, the doors of which are no longer shut so that, without much trouble or exertion, he may visit the famous temple of goddess Bhawani for worship and then, after surveying the rolling hills and valleys that lend enchantment to the landscape, proceed to see the recently installed equestrian statue of Shivaji that dominates the scene miles around the mountain ranges.

But in the time of Shivaji the region was incredibly inhospitable, with the jungle growing in all its chaotic exuberance so that the traveller was forced to watch every step of his lest he should be tripped up by the uncleared undergrowth or be taken unawares by the denizens of the forest. Sitting serenely on a maze of tree-clad and mist-crowned hills and overlooking valleys sunk deep into the bowels of the earth, Pratapgad despised the pitiful attempts of evil-minded men to gain possession of her by force or fraud. Built on a high rock near the source of the Krishna, it commands the entire area embraced by the banks of the Nira and the Koyna, besides, at the time of which we are writing, strengthening the defences of the Par pass.

About the natural strength of Pratapgad a writer says: "The western and northern sides of the fort are gigantic cliffs with an almost vertical drop in many places of seven or eight hundred feet. The towers and bastions on the south and east are often thirty to forty feet high, while there is in most places a scarp of naked black rock not much lower." Overlooking the Koyna valley, the place selected for the Khan's reception was least suited for conversion into a battle-ground. When the Bijapur general agreed to meet Shivaji on this cleverly chosen site, it was decreed by an inscrutable destiny that the

Khan should not return alive. Rightly does Khafi Khan say: "The Angel of Doom led him by the collar to his fate."

An artistically decorated and richly furnished *shamiana* was erected in the open space for the reception of Afzal Khan. As the day of the interview dawned, November 10, 1659, Shivaji rose early, offered devout prayers for victory against the mighty enemy and prepared himself to meet any situation. He appointed a small council, with his mother as the head, to carry on the administration of his newly-acquired realm in the event of his death or imprisonment. To secure his person from sudden and treacherous attack, he donned a light but well-made armour and similarly covered his head with a steel helmet. A sharp and short sword called *bichwa* was concealed under his long and flowing robe, while a set of steel claws known as *waghnakh* worn on the fingers of the left hand, completed his precautions for self-protection.

As the appointed hour for the interview approached, Shivaji bowed reverently before his mother, Jijabai, and taking Jivba Mahala and Sambhaji Kavji, both distinguished for their courage and skill as swordsmen,* as his companions, descended slowly from the fort to meet the waiting Khan. The Khan, who had been transported earlier to the *shamiana* in a palanquin, was foaming with fury at the costliness of the pavilion and its furnishings and asked the waiting envoys how such appurtenances of royalty could have been acquired by the son of a mere Sardar. The Brahmins diplomatically pacified the angry man by assuring him that the things that belonged to the Sultan would soon be restored to His Majesty!

Shivaji, who had now approached the *shamiana* with his attendants, saw Syed Banda, the famous swordsman of Bijapur, inside the tent and sent word that the man should be removed from the place and stationed at a distance. Seeing that his request was complied with, he walked briskly towards the pavilion and entered it, leaving his men outside. The Khan, who was seated on a heavily cushioned platform, rose ostensibly to embrace his host. Taking advantage of his superior height and strength, he suddenly drew Shivaji towards him and raising his left arm caught the head and the neck of the Maratha under it. Shivaji was overwhelmed by the suddenness of the assault and the terrible pressure on his neck. The Khan next unsheathed his sword and struck a savage blow at Shivaji who was now almost entirely at his mercy. He was, however, saved by the hidden armour he had so prudently worn.

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* Different authorities give different names of the men that accompanied Shivaji during his interview with Afzal Khan. B. M. Purandhare, in his Marathi volumes on Shivaji, quotes a source which mentions the following names: Jivba Mahala, Sambhaji Kavji Kondhalkar, Sambhaji Karvar, Kathoji Ingle, Kondaji Kank, Krishnaji Gaekwad, Siddi Ibrahim, Surji Katke, Visaji Murumbak and Esaji Kank.

Shivaji, who had been temporarily put out of action by the suddenness of the attack and by the equally unexpected impact of a vastly superior physical strength upon his body, recovered quickly and, realizing the magnitude of the peril that faced him and the need for prompt action, struck the *waghnakh* at the Khan's body with all his strength, the sharp steel claws biting deeply into the powerful man's bowels. With the same suddenness that had made him helpless Shivaji now became the master of the situation. His blow relaxed the Khan's stranglehold and, releasing himself promptly from the man's "embrace", Shivaji struck the enemy again this time with his *bichwa*. The Bijapur general was not made of clay, but even his powerful frame could not sustain two smashing blows. He fell down bleeding profusely and shouting "treachery".

Syed Banda, the faithful attendant of Afzal Khan, who was watching the grim drama from a distance, rushed at Shivaji and struck a powerful blow at the latter's head with his long sword, but again Shivaji's forethought saved him. Borrowing one of the two swords held by his companion, Jivba Mahala, Shivaji faced his new assailant, but before the two accomplished swordsmen could make much progress with their duel, Jivba made short work of the Syed with his other sword. The mortal agony of the severely wounded and disembowelled Afzal Khan was mercifully ended by Shivaji's second attendant, Sambhaji

Kavji, who cut off the Khan's head as he was being carried to the waiting palanquin.

A stirring ballad on the famous encounter was composed in Marathi soon after the event and even at this distance of time it is heard with unabated enthusiasm and excitement over the length and breadth of Maharashtra. Here are a few lines from Acworth's excellent translation of the ballad, describing how the two men met:

> "The Moslem leap'd upon him,
> His grasp was fierce and fell,
> And how he plied the dagger
> The dinted mail might tell.
> But Shivaji the Raja
> In answer made him feel
> The twin sting of the scorpion*
> The deadly claws of steel.
> His entrails torn and bloody
> Gap'd through the horrid wound;
> But Abdul was a warrior bold
> And falter'd not nor swoon'ed,
> He loos'd his girdle deftly,
> Uncoil'd the sword below,
> And dealt upon the Raja's head
> A fierce and furious blow.
> It cleft the embroider'd turban,
> And twisted chains fourteen,
> And the Raja felt, as steed the spur,
> The sword edge sharp and keen.
> His blade leap'd out and wrapped the Khan,
> Like the sacred thread to view,
> Between the neck and shoulder
> It struck and clove him through.
> He fell, down fell the Moslem,
> While steadfast stood the King.
> Hearken, Maratha princes,
> His glorious state I sing."

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* The *bichwa*, derived from *bichu* or scorpion, is a double-bladed dagger.

When Shivaji and his companions returned to the fort with their ghastly trophy, a gun boomed to announce their arrival in safety. It was also a signal to the waiting Maratha armies to attack the enemy. The carnage on the Bijapur side was terrible and only those that promptly surrendered were spared. Some members of the dead general's family, including his eldest son, Fazl Khan, who lived to become Shivaji's inveterate enemy, escaped.

The booty that fell into the hands of the Marathas was immense. "All the artillery," says Sarkar, "wagons, ammunition, treasure, tents and equippage, transport — cattle and baggage of an entire army, fell into the victors' hands. Among them were 65 elephants, 4,000 horses, 1,200 camels, 2,000 bundles of clothing, and 10 lakhs of rupees in cash and jewellery." Thus ended the career of a man and his army that had sallied forth with exultant hopes of extinguishing the flame of independence kindled by Shivaji. Afzal Khan's severed head was buried beneath a tower in the fort of Pratapgad and is called Afzal Buruj.

Conflicting versions concerning what is known as the Afzal episode have found their place in the pages of history. With a self-assurance wholly unbecoming of responsible writers when dealing with dubious facts, some historians have branded Shivaji as a "treacherous Maratha". None of the persons on the side of the Khan, excepting his Brahmin envoy, Krishnaji Bhaskar, who were present in the *shamiana* escaped alive after the Bijapur general's death. How then could an eye-witness account be produced on behalf of the so-called "murdered" man to prove that Shivaji struck the first blow? And yet what may truly be described as one of the most impudent fakes has been given currency by some writers as a sober fact of history. The king of Maharashtra was a man of great veracity and he could be trusted to present an unvarnished account of his meeting with Afzal Khan when narrating it to his spiritual leader, Ramdas Swami. Shivaji told the Swami : "When at our interview, Abdulla (i.e. Afzal Khan) caught me under his arm, I had almost lost my consciousness. But for the Swami's blessing, I would not have escaped from his grip".

Any detailed discussion of the rights and wrongs of the episode is, however, as irrelevant as it is absurd. Afzal Khan was notoriously unprincipled and cruel and to these forbidding traits he added the unforgivable offence of bigotry. The death of such a man, in whom the milk of human kindness had congealed into a poisonous hatred for his fellowmen, certainly does not deserve the tribute of tears, no matter in what manner his earthly career was ended.

When dealing with this episode, we may well recall the struggle between Christian and Apollyon in John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress,* Christian, the embodiment of goodness, with his face turned towards the light; Apollyon, the very incarnation of evil, rejoicing, to quote a famous writer "in his own wickedness and using every device of cunning and treachery to wear down his foe". Sarkar's well-considered verdict on the Afzal episode clinches the issue: "The weight of recorded evidence as well as the probabilities of the case supports the view that Afzal Khan struck the first blow."

Shivaji did not rest on his laurels after sending Afzal Khan to his doom. Scarcely before Bijapur recovered from the confusion and consternation caused by the event, he sent an army into the enemy territory under the command of Annaji Datto who took possession of the important fort of Panhala in the former State of Kolhapur on November 28. Panhala was the capital of the western district of the Adilshahi kingdom and the officer in charge of the region, Rustam-i-Zaman, was loath to surrender valuable territory without a fight. His forces were joined by those of Afzal Khan's son, Fazl Khan, who missed no opportunity in his attempt to avenge the death of his father. The battle near Panhala, fought on December 28, 1659, gave decisive victory to Shivaji who pursued the fleeing enemy upto the gates of Bijapur. Collecting a large booty from some of the prosperous towns in the area, he returned to his stronghold, Rajgad, towards the end of January 1660.

Young Ali, the unfortunate Sultan, was confused and confounded by the repeated reverses to his arms and fortunes. He saw the mighty edifice of the royal power, built in the

Deccan for his dynasty by its founder, Yusuf Adilshah, crumbling steadily before his eyes. Its disintegration was indeed inevitable. Like the Bahmani Kingdom, the States that were built on its ashes were entirely wrong as survivals in the same manner as the rise of Hyderabad, Oudh and Bengal as independent States after the destruction of the Mughul Empire was a political enormity. In the extremity of his despair, which was also a measure of the imbecility of his court and government, Ali Adilshah readily accepted the offer of a rebellious Abyssinian slave, Siddi Jauhar, to save the situation for him. Jauhar was a competent soldier, but he was both a fool and a traitor, who made grandiose projects to establish an empire for himself! He had earlier usurped the fief of Karnul in Andhra Pradesh and had fallen from royal favour for his traitorous ambitions and activities.

Such a man came forward to salvage the fortunes of the decaying Adilshahi kingdom. He was dignified with the title of Salbat Khan and sent against Shivaji. By a grave error of judgment, Shivaji allowed himself to be blockaded in the fort of Panhala, (March 2, 1660), which was besieged by the Siddi and his allies with great determination. Formidable forces were ranged against Shivaji. Salbat Khan's own considerable army was reinforced by the troops of the ubiquitous Fazl Khan, and those of another defeated general, Rustam-i-Zaman. Fazl Khan's chief retainer, Siddi Halal, was also an able soldier. Both he and his master spared no efforts or expenditure in pressing the siege with the utmost vigour. The blood of Afzal Khan cried for vengeance — immediate and terrible! As if such an array of armed strength was not sufficient, Baji Ghorpade, about whose well-deserved destruction we have already written, and several other Maratha nobles contributed their levies in order to hasten the surrender of the fort.

Shivaji was thus confronted by another major crisis, so soon after overcoming the danger from Afzal Khan's invasion. The fragile State of Maharashtra was forced to wage an unequal war on two fronts against two formidable Muslim powers, while its architect and mainstay was condemned to enforced idleness in a closely invested fortress. The repeated attempts of Netaji Palkar to compel the Bijapur general to raise the siege of Panhala proved abortive. In the north, the premier nobleman of the Moghul court, Shaista Khan, threatened to engulf the entire kingdom of Shivaji by invading his territories with a large and well-equipped army. A shrewd and competent general, the commander of the imperial forces saw in the Maratha prince's predicament a heaven-sent opportunity for him to deliver a mortal blow at the new State. He occupied Poona in May 1660 and took up his residence in Shivaji's house, Lal Mahal.

Shivaji was confident of dominating the situation if only he could escape from Panhala, but he could not make his exit except by coming to terms with the besiegers — an extremely remote possibility. He pondered deeply over the situation and at last decided to try the weapon of diplomacy against Siddi Jauhar. He knew that the Siddi was a vainglorious man and amenable to flattery. He, therefore, attempted to win the besieging commander's confidence by judiciously stimulating his personal ambitions.

A meeting was arranged between the two men, one a credulous fool and another a subtle and farseeing planner. Shivaji invited the newly ennobled Abyssinian slave to consider whether his status, however much it was elevated, could ever be equal to the position of a sovereign in his own right. The crown was indeed the only fitting reward for his outstanding abilities and enterprise. It would be an affront to his eminence if he were to be content with a lesser position. Shivaji wound up his exhortation by promising his wholehearted assistance to the Siddi in his attempts to win a kingdom for himself.

The upstart was jubilant. With a daring and resourceful "friend" like Shivaji, was there anything he could not accomplish? The siege of the fort ceased to interest the Siddi! But Fazal Khan, who had been watching the happenings around him with the unsleeping eyes of Argus, could not be similarly won over. His attempts to force the surrender of the fort, however, had cost him dearly and he no longer wished to abandon discretion in favour of valour. His tents were accordingly pitched at a respectable distance from the ramparts of Panhala — a circumstance that helped Shivaji and his men to clear out of the fort without attracting immediate attention. The night of July 13, 1660 was an ideal one for making the escape. It was a particularly dark and rainy night when the guards of the camp preferred the security and warmth of their tents to a zealous performance of their watch and ward duties.

Taking a large body of his men with him, Shivaji stole out of the fort through a rear gate and, after destroying or dispersing the Bijapur troops that noticed his escape, he made for Vishalgad, twenty-seven miles to the west, with every possible speed. Fazal Khan, who was soon apprised of this escape, speedily collected his troops and pursued Shivaji, lighting his way through the darkness with blazing torches. The distance between the pursuer and the pursued narrowed dangerously as night was followed by day. Shivaji was in a dilemma. Being outnumbered, it was evidently impossible for him to give battle to the enemy with any hope of success. He, therefore, adopted a more workable plan of action. Detaching a sizable number of troops from his escort, he put them under the command of Baji Prabhu with orders to contest the advance of the pursuers to the bitter end, while he himself continued the journey to Vishalgad with the rest of his party.

The scheme worked admirably. Baji Prabhu and his gallant men held Fazal Khan's troops at bay for five precious hours till their master reached his destination. During the heroic stand Prabhu lost his life — an inspiring episode in Maratha history which will be dealt with in a later chapter. Wiser than his father, Fazal Khan refused to attack Shivaji in a difficult region and withdrew to Panhala with a heavy heart.

Shivaji was now free to make his plans to meet the Moghul menace. From his recent encounters with the Bijapur armies he was able to take the true measure of their strength and weakness. He could see that the proud Adilshahi kingdom was now in the throes of death and could not, therefore, effectively challenge his great work. The Moghuls, however, were of a different mettle. Their resources were infinitely superior to those of Bijapur, while their fighting forces were almost invincible. Besides, the man who sat on the throne at Delhi was a determined and implacable foe, who considered no means unfair in contriving the destruction of those that challenged his policies or paramountcy. By returning Panhala Shivaji secured a patched-up peace with Bijapur in September 1660 so that he could give his undivided attention to the invaders from the north. His war with the imperialists and how he eventually overcame their aggression will be described in the chapters that follow.

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CHAPTER 4

THE IMPERIALISTS

AGGRESSION is an old infirmity of the strong man. The rulers of ancient and medieval India practised it against one another with a thoroughness that eventually encompassed the ruin of their country. *Pax Romana* was a frank assertion of the overwhelming military superiority of the Roman conquerors in their far-flung empire. European imperialism, also deriving its strength and sanctions entirely from force, is still a current coin, although it is fast wearing out and may soon cease to be legal tender!

The Moghuls were convinced and enthusiastic practitioners of imperialism. Babar's sojourn in India was too short to permit him to conceive ambitious projects of conquest inside the country, while his son, Humayun, spent the best part of his effective life as a fugitive. The aggressive trait of the Timurids found its full play during the long reign of Akbar. This great and benevolent sovereign, who, like Antoninus, governed his realm like a father, abandoned all the civilized canons of moderation and justice when dealing with other independent States in the country. The massacre of Chitor, the conquest of Gondwana by driving its valiant Queen to commit suicide, and the spoliation of Ahmednagar after hastening the death of the brave, noble and sagacious Sultana Chand Bibi, are irrefutable examples of Akbar's unprovoked aggressions. The siege of Asirgarh and its occupation in January 1601 through "perfidy and bribery" furnish one more illustration of the great ruler's indifference to ends and means where his own *amour-propre* was concerned.

Jahangir was also animated by vaulting ambitions, but being heavily addicted to liquor and opium and enslaved by the charms of Nurjahan, this "able degenerate" was incapable of any sustained action. But the forward policy of his son and successor, Shah Jahan, amply compensated for his sloth. Shah Jahan's aggressions culminated in the destruction of the independent State of Ahmednagar in 1632. Being dedicated Sunnis, both he and his son, Aurangzeb, took "special pleasure in warring with the Sultans of Golkonda and Bijapur, who adhered to the Shia faith, and looked for alliance and protection to the Shah of Persia rather than the Padshah of Hindustan".

Aurangzeb was extremely fond of playing the role of "a great pike in a pond". He had acquired the title of Alamgir, meaning 'World Compeller' or 'Universe Grasper' with every intention of proving worthy of it. His first Viceroyalty of the Deccan in 1636-37 was brief and uneventful. He had, however, become a maturer man, with his aims and objects well defined, when he was reappointed to the charge in 1653.

Aurangzeb possessed qualities of greatness, with which few in his dynasty were endowed in such abundance, but goodness and tolerance were not among them. He was competent, clear-headed and extremely clever. When he reached man's estate, nothing influenced him more strongly than the belief that the imperial crown belonged to him and to none else in his family, including his father, the reigning monarch! His moves and actions were, therefore, guided by an overpowering desire to seize the prize by any means. The gold of Golkonda and the wealth of Bijapur, amassed by despoiling the rich temples and the fertile regions of the south, were of inestimable value in his contest with his brothers for the peacock throne.

Considerations of right and wrong were of no value to this determined and ruthless man. Forcing hostilities on the ruler of Golkonda in February 1656, Aurangzeb instructed his son, Prince Muhammad Sultan, to accomplish the downfall of the Deccan kingdom by brushing aside all principles of decency and fairplay. Commenting on his sermon on subterfuge and perfidy and the part played by Shah Jahan in the episode, the *Oxford History* says: "Such was the treachery which Aurangzeb and his father were not ashamed to employ against a Muslim king whose only offence was his independence."

The Moghul imperialists' dealings with Bijapur were even more aggressive. Shah Jahan's war of 1635-36 against the premier Deccan state was notorious for its frightfulness. The holocaust ended only after the Adilshah agreed in May 1636 to render obedience to the throne of Delhi and to make a peace offering of rupees twenty lakhs, besides guaranteeing to respect the frontiers of his neighbour, the Sultan of Golkonda. As a reward for his submission he was given a portion of the territories that had belonged to the annexed State of Ahmednagar.

The treaty of 1636 gave respite to Bijapur from Moghul aggression for a little over two decades, but, after the death of Mahmud Adilshah on November 4, 1656, the imperialists could not resist the temptation of resuming the war against the unfortunate state and its people. Prince Aurangzeb discovered an amazing pretext for reviving the hostilities. He challenged the succession of young Ali Adilshah by expressing doubts whether Ali was really his father's son! Like his father, Aurangzeb was a pitiless conqueror. Burning, massacre and loot were his favourite weapons for striking terror into the hearts of the victims of his aggression. Assisted by an able traitor, Mir Jumla, he penetrated deep into the Bijapur territory and would probably have made a short meal of the Adilshahi kingdom in the war of 1657 if his father had not intervened with directions to end the hostilities.

Aurangzeb was now free to turn his attention to the rising power of the Marathas, but, while he was making warlike preparations to face the new challenge, the news of his father's serious illness in September 1657 drove him to concentrate all his energies on the supreme task of snatching the imperial diadem from his rival brothers. The sanguinary war of succession lasted from 1658-59, which gave a welcome respite to Shivaji to strengthen his position against the inevitable and more formidable aggressions from the north at a later, but not very distant, date.

It stands to reason that for some time Aurangzeb did not take Shivaji seriously. He dismissed the Maratha, so much his junior, as a mere, if resourceful, adventurer who could be taught the error of his ways without much expenditure of effort or blood. Shivaji heartily welcomed the cunning

Moghul's mistake in underestimating his inherent strength, especially in the years of its growth. He offered his services to Aurangzeb when the war with Bijapur was renewed in 1657. The offer, addressed to Multafat Khan, the Moghul Governor of Ahmednagar, elicited no specific reply. The Governor, however, was instructed by Prince Aurangzeb "to keep the path of correspondence with him (Shivaji) open".

The Prince was in fact playing a deep game, without, however, realizing that for the first time he was encountered by a man who was his peer in diplomacy and astuteness. It was Aurangzeb's aim to secure the adhesion of the Marathas to his cause and make them fight his battles without his having to pay them anything in return. Shivaji was no less adroit when he demanded the recognition of his sovereignty by the Moghul Government. Nothing was more repugnant to the inclinations of Aurangzeb than to concede such a request. He and his father had launched a costly war against the most powerful state in the south in order to vindicate the absolute paramountcy of the Moghuls over the length and breadth of the country. In doing so they had elected to fight against their own co-religionists. Would it be in accordance with Aurangzeb's devout adherence to Islam to countenance the independent position of an 'infidel'? It is true that the additional reason for proceeding against Bijapur was to expel the heretical Shia sect from the land, but could there ever exist for the "faithful" a real comparison between the creed of the Adilshahs and the religion of Shivaji?

Nevertheless, being deep in his designs, Aurangzeb made an elaborate pretence of promoting amity between himself and the Maratha ruler who was persuaded to send his demands to the Viceroy. Sonopant, Shivaji's minister, proceeded to the Moghul camp and asked on behalf of his master for a formal recognition of his right to all the forts and territories of Bijapur already in his possession. Shivaji also announced his intention of taking possession of the port of Dhabol and the region around it. Aurangzeb had little to lose by entertaining such claims, especially when his favourable attitude towards Shivaji was likely to intensify the bitterness between the Maratha chief and the Bijapur Government. He accordingly wrote to Shivaji on April 23, 1657, signifying his approval of the latter's demands and calling upon him to prove his "devotion" to the Moghul cause by rendering armed assistance to the imperial armies in the war against Bijapur.

Shivaji was by no means deceived by such blandishments. He could see that the vague and non-committal Moghul promises meant nothing and he would certainly not waste his men and resources in strengthening the hands of the powerful imperialists, the brunt of whose aggressions he would have to bear sooner or later. Commenting on Shivaji's rejection of Moghul overtures, Sarkar writes : "The vague promises of the Moghul Prince could not satisfy him. Even a less astute man than he must have known that such promises would amount to nothing in practice when the need of the imperialists would be over."

Seeing that the imperial armies in the Deccan were fully occupied with their campaigns against the Bijapur kingdom, Shivaji sent his troops under two able officers with instructions to attack the regions in the vicinity of Ahmednagar, the chief city of Moghul Deccan. The Maratha expedition was most successful and caused such alarm in the city that the commander of the Ahmednagar fort was forced to remove much of the valuable property into the stronghold for greater safety.

While his men were raiding the Ahmednagar district, Shivaji himself led an attack on Junnar, an important town in the vicinity of Shivneri, his birth-place. In a surprise night attack on April 30, 1657, he captured the town by scaling its walls and dispersing the guards. He secured a large booty, including 300,000 *hons*, 200 horses and a good deal of costly jewellery and clothing. The bulk of the imperial army was then engaged in the siege of Kalyani, but Aurangzeb, who grew furious at Shivaji's hostile activities, took prompt and effective measures to prevent similar discomfitures to the Moghul armies.

The Viceroy's letters to his officers, urging them to guard the imperial territories with greater vigilance and zeal, "breath-ed fury and revenge" against the Marathas. They were instructed that by way of reprisals unbridled terrorism should be practised against the inhabitants of Shivaji's possessions. The Marathas should be taught a memorable lesson by invading their land from all sides and by "wasting the villages, slaying the people without pity, and plundering them to the extreme".

Sarkar, who quotes this passage, further describes the anger of Aurangzeb by recalling his ruthless orders for reducing Poona and Chakan, the much-prized possessions of Shivaji, to utter ruin. No lenience or remissness was to be shown in "slaying and enslaving the people", while the village headmen and peasants in the Moghul territory, who had helped Shivaji and his men, should be destroyed without pity. The tyrant's orders and their merciless execution sent a wave of horror throughout Maharashtra, but the spirit of resistance to the pitiless invader never weakened. Frightfulness has never succeeded in destroying just and noble causes.

Hostilities in the Deccan, however, ended in September 1657 with the conclusion of peace between the Moghuls and the Sultan of Bijapur. Shivaji also called off his offensive against the invaders and asked Aurangzeb for favourable terms. By this time the Viceroy's interest in his charge had declined considerably. Reports of his father's serious illness diverted his attention towards the north. The prospect of winning an empire for himself was far more alluring than the painful undertaking of reducing the doughty hillmen of Maharashtra to submission.

Nevertheless, he did not abandon his usual craftiness when dealing with Shivaji. The Maratha chief conveyed his wishes to him through his agent, Raghunath Pant, who reached the Moghul camp as the Prince was leaving for the north on January 25, 1658. In a letter, the tone of which was worthy of a vainglorious person, Aurangzeb condescended to comply with all the requests of Shivaji and invited him to strive in return for the greater glory of the Moghul Empire.

But Aurangzeb's gestures of good-will were a mere make-believe. In fact, his real attitude towards Shivaji was revealed to his officers on the eve of his departure for the north. He directed them to exercise eternal vigilance in order to protect the Moghul Deccan from the incursions of the redoubtable Marathas. His letter of December 1657 to Mir Jumla reveals both the extent of his anxiety for the security of the Empire in the south and his uncontrollable revulsion for Shivaji. Though a cultivated and elegant product of Moghul education and upbringing, Aurangzeb forgot himself and descended to levels entirely unworthy of his breeding when dealing with or discussing Shivaji. He had failed to come to terms with the Marathas when he turned his back on the Deccan. The outcome of the strife was, however, most beneficial to Shivaji since he gained a substantial accession of territories, especially in the Konkan. The manner in which he conquered Kalyan and annexed the important hill-forts in its vicinity, has already been described in an earlier chapter.

Aurangzeb never forgot that he had left behind a resourceful enemy in the Deccan. The rise of Shivaji to power after the cessation of Moghul hostilities was remarkably rapid. He had humbled Bijapur by destroying its formidable general, Afzal Khan, and the army of invasion that had accompanied him. It was, therefore, necessary to send against him armed forces of irresistible strength, commanded by a man of proved ability and experience. Aurangzeb was now able to give his undivided attention to the affairs of the Deccan. He had at last gained the cherished goal of stealing the crown and sceptre from his father and elder brother by practising the most odious cruelties against his own near and dear ones and by reducing the north into a shambles by the war of succession. Despite his natural inclination towards simple and Spartan life, he used his second coronation in July 1659 as an occasion for the display of Moghul splendour on a scale unknown even in the annals of that fabulously ostentatious Empire.

The task of administering the storm-tossed southern province was entrusted to Shaista Khan, a senior nobleman who had already won his laurels both as a general and as a governor. He had administered his charge of Malwa with competence and knew the Deccan and its affairs intimately. His leadership in war was amply demonstrated during Aurangzeb's invasion of Golkonda. A major undertaking of the new Viceroy was to "suppress" Shivaji. and towards this end he was given a large and efficient army.

Apart from his own considerable talents and the wholehearted support of the Emperor, Shaista Khan could count upon the enthusiastic co-operation of the Bijapur *Darbar* in his efforts to combat the Maratha resurgence. We saw in the previous chapter how Afzal Khan's son, Fazl Khan, and a number of other Bijapur officers were making the most strenuous efforts to destroy Shivaji and his men and how they had nearly succeeded in their designs by reducing him to a desperate predicament in the fort of Panhala from which he eventually escaped by means of a remarkable ruse. A war on two fronts, dreaded at all times even by highly organized military powers, thus became inevitable for Shivaji who, however, faced it with exemplary courage and resourcefulness.

Conscious of his superior military strength, Shaista Khan marched towards the Poona district, leaving Ahmednagar on February 25, 1660. He systematically subdued the strongholds that lay along his route and garrisoned them with his own troops with the object of protecting his line of communications with the Moghul capital in the Deccan from surprise attacks by the Marathas. By April he gained control over the regions around Poona and Baramati and pushed forward towards the south as far as Shirval. Poona itself was occupied on May 9.

The Khan was aware of the inestimable advantage and initiative derived by him from the fact of Shivaji's enforced idleness in the fort of Panhala. He, however, found Poona, then a mere hamlet, an inconvenient place for his headquarters, especially in view of the entire surrounding area having been previously denuded of all provisions and human habitation. The rains, followed by swollen streams and floods, aggravated the hardships of the Moghuls who had long been accustomed to the luxuries of life even when on active service. Chakan, a fortified town eighteen miles from Poona, was an obvious choice for the encampment of the imperial army. The Khan was confident of overrunning the place without much difficulty since the castle was neither large nor strong. It could certainly not be compared with any of the hill-forts of Maharashtra. the conquest of which had invariably cost the enemy dearly. Situated on a flat ground, the Chakan fort could not be expected to withstand the heavy artillery fire of the Moghuls.

Shaista Khan, who began his siege operations in the last week of June 1630, however, failed to realize that it was not the brick and mortar. but the spirit and the sword-arm of the garrison that he had to reckon with. The castle was under the command of Phirangoji Narsala, the veteran soldier who had seen active service under Shahaji and who was among the earliest influential Marathas to join the patriotic movement inaugurated by his master's young son. From those early days Narsala guarded the fort of Chakan with a devotion that became the most outstanding trait of Shivaji's adherents.

Confronted by an enemy that was in possession of the best military engineering skill and material of the time for blowing up his modest stronghold, Narsala had no illusions about the magnitude of his peril. But the thought of surrender never occurred to him even for a fleeting moment. He knew the predicament of Shivaji and could not expect to receive help from any quarter to compel the invaders to raise the siege. Besides, his master had directed him to hold on as long as he could and surrender to the enemy only under a compelling necessity.

Meanwhile, the Khan left no known military device untried to hasten the surrender of the heroic garrison. Heavy guns, brought from the Moghul forts in the Deccan, poured incessant fire into the fort from raised platforms, while trenches were laid for blasting its outer walls. But the siege dragged on week after week, with the defenders repulsing the enemy with an unceasing shower of shots, bullets and rockets. Rain and cleverly organized night attacks by the Marathas added to the discomfiture of the Moghuls who were often driven out of their trenches.

The superior military equipment and the staying power of the besiegers, however, prevailed eventually. On August 14, 1660, that is, fifty-four days after the commencement of the siege, the invaders succeeded in exploding a mine which carried away a bastion and the brave men defending it. When the bastion was blown up, says Khafi Khan, "stones, bricks and men flew into the air like pigeons". Even so, the invaders did not venture to rush into the breach, but cautiously cut their way through it "placing the shields in front of their faces". But, in spite of their caution, surprise was in store for them. The indefatigable Narsala and his men had mended the breach overnight by raising an earth-work inside the fort wall.

Nevertheless, the end was near. "Invested in the citadel," say Kincaid and Parasnis, "without supplies and with no hope of reinforcements, while the enemy got them in plenty, Narsala capitulated." Shaista Khan was filled with admiration for the heroism of Narsala and his men and invited the Maratha commander to join the Moghul army. Narsala politely declined the offer, preferring a life of "blood, toil, tears and sweat" to the gauds and glitter of office under the imperialists. Shivaji, who had escaped from Panhala in July, received his loyal comrade with affection and gratitude and made him the commandant of Bhupalgad.

The Chakan episode convinced the Moghul Viceroy that the conquest of Maharashtra, with its numerous strongholds garrisoned by determined men, could not be accomplished without an enormous expenditure of time, money and human life. His own inclinations were in favour of accepting the peace offers that had been made earlier by Shivaji, but the Emperor had forbidden any such understanding. In fact, he had sent Maharaja Jaswant Singh of Jodhpur from Gujarat to reinforce the armies of Shaista Khan in the Deccan. The war of the imperialists against the Marathas accordingly dragged on wearily, with the Moghuls achieving no spectacular victory and yet steadily strengthening their hold on the life of the Deccan.

The year 1661 began with the Moghuls making concentrated efforts to conquer North Konkan. Many areas of the Kalyan district fell into their hands, but the forts and the chief cities were able to maintain their independence. An army sent from Poona in January under the command of an experienced general, Kartalab Khan, to capture Kalyan was attacked by Shivaji and forced to give battle in the difficult terrain of the Western Ghats. Encumbered with heavy baggage and artillery, deprived of all access to the plains and fearing death from thirst in the narrow and rocky paths and jungles of the ghats, the Moghuls fought desperately to escape from their terrible predicament, despite the realization that success in such a situation, especially against an enemy who knew every inch of the ground, was impossible. On February 3, 1661 the Moghul commander surrendered all his equipment to the Marathas in preference to the complete annihilation of his army and in addition paid a large ransom in order to secure a safe retreat for his men. The gains of the Marathas in the engagement were immense, but they were offset in May when they lost Kalyan to the enemy.

To compensate for the mounting loss of his territory, Shivaji descended into South Konkan and made easy conquests as far as Goa. But the Moghuls could not be compelled to relax their pressure on his kingdom by such diversionary tactics. The conflict had now developed into a war of attrition and of nerves. Assessing the Moghul campaign in Maharashtra under Shaista Khan's directions, Sarkar writes: "The net result of the operations of these two years was that the Mughals kept their grip on the extreme north of Konkan, including the city and district of Kalyan — barring occasional raids into that debatable land of the Pen sub-division — while Shivaji remained master of the southern part, namely, the south-eastern corner of the Kolaba district and nearly the whole of the Ratnagiri district.........".

Such a stalemate was certainly not in the interests of Shivaji. Only by dislodging the invaders from Maharashtra could he hope to enlarge and strengthen the edifice of independence.

The armies of the imperialists were incredibly superior to his own. It was evidently impossible to uproot the mighty banyan tree, but it could certainly be pulled down by striking at the trunk. After much deliberation Shivaji decided upon the amazing course of surprising the Commander-in-Chief of the imperial forces in his own house and killing him. For the sheer audacity of the conception of the plan and its execution, it could not be equalled even by the most daring adventure of modern commandos. Shivaji knew the house of his childhood as well as he knew his own hand, but the mansion was rendered almost inaccessible to outsiders, being surrounded by the quarters of the Khan's guards besides the band-room and those of his officers. Not far from the place was the camp of the Maharaja of Jodhpur whose contingent consisted of 10,000 men.

Shivaji, who had taken up his residence at Sinhgad in order to be close to the imperialists, had carefully studied the disposition of the enemy camp as well as the arrangements made for the protection of the Viceroy and his harem. He selected four hundred men to accompany him on his adventure and descended from the Lion Fort on the afternoon of April 5, 1663. The Maratha party, which was lightly armed, covered the eleven-mile distance to Poona the same evening and by offering a plausible explanation to the guards entered the imperial camp by nightfall.

The night was dark and it being the sixth day of Ramzan the Nawab and his retinue had partaken of a heavy meal and gone to sleep. By midnight complete silence reigned in the house. All but a few in the kitchen had fallen sound asleep. Detaching a small body of men from his party, Shivaji softly moved into the house, surprised and noiselessly killed the cooks engaged in preparing the pre-dawn meal of the Khan, and started boring a hole in the wall that blocked his admission to the inner chamber. The silence of the night was broken by the falling mud and bricks and the groans of the dying men in the kitchen. The servants of the Khan woke up in alarm, but they were sent back to sleep by the irate nobleman with a rebuke for disturbing his repose by their imaginary fears.

After allowing time for the awakened inmates to compose themselves to sleep again, Shivaji entered the inner apartment through the hole, followed by his men.

The Khan and his attendants were now entirely at the mercy of the intrepid intruders. Shivaji rushed at the Khan and smote the bewildered nobleman with his sword. At this critical moment, a resourceful woman put out the lights, making the task of annihilation extremely difficult for the Marathas. The Khan, whose fingers had been cut off with Shivaji's sword, was hastily removed to a place of safety during the ensuing confusion which became worse confounded when two of the Marathas inadvertently fell into a cistern, making a great noise with the splashing water. Meanwhile, the other half of Shivaji's party pounced upon the guards from outside, slaughtering all those who opposed them.

The sleeping bandsmen were hauled out of their beds and ordered to play the band. It was an unearthly hour for any music to be played but the protesting bandsmen complied when they were assured that the directive was from the Khan himself! The beating of the kettle-drums, in unison or otherwise with a plethora of other instruments, the shouts of the invading Marathas, and the surprised wailings of the awakened Moghul soldiery, produced a situation of indescribable confusion and panic. The apartment of the Viceroy was reduced to a shambles, while outside a veritable bedlam prevailed.

It was now time for Shivaji and his men to withdraw, which they did as suddenly as they came. They returned to Sinhgad by the direct route, while the Moghuls searched high and low in the camp in their fruitless attempts to apprehend the elusive enemy. The Maratha adventure was a complete success. While Shivaji lost only six men, the Moghul casualties were far more numerous and serious. Abul Fath, Shaista Khan's son, a captain of the imperial army, forty of the Khan's attendants and six of his wives and slave-girls lost their lives that night. In addition, two other sons of the Khan and eight women were wounded. The casualties among the women were entirely due to the inability of the Marathas to distinguish them from men in the darkness that prevailed in the hall after the lights were put out.

The blow to the prestige of the Moghuls was shattering. The Viceroy was the maternal uncle of His Imperial Majesty, besides being the *amir-ul-umara* or premier peer of the Empire. Bitter tears of mortification were shed by his relatives both at the court and in the camp in the Deccan. A mighty Khan, whose merest whisper had reverberated like thunder in the ranks of his subordinates, lay helpless and humiliated. Instead of winning plaudits as a great conqueror, he suddenly became an object of pity and sympathy.

On the following morning his officers called on him to console him in his misfortune. The Khan was profoundly disconcerted when Maharaja Jaswant Singh met him. As if the Rajput was responsible for his humiliation, he cried: "When the enemy fell upon me, I imagined that you had already died fighting against them!" The insinuation that Jaswant Singh connived at the downfall of the Khan was wholly unfounded because, as we shall see in the next chapter, none of the premier Rajput nobles that had chosen to serve Aurangzeb, despite the Emperor's proved wickedness and perfidy, was capable of subordinating his personal advancement to the wider interests of the country. Shivaji's own account of his night attack proves beyond a shadow of doubt that the entire credit for planning and executing it with such consummate skill and daring belongs to him alone and to none else.

Soon after the incident the wounded and mortified Khan retreated to Aurangabad for greater safety. The Emperor, far from commiserating with him over his fallen eminence, scolded him for his alleged carelessness in dealing with a "wily" adversary. As a mark of imperial displeasure, he was transferred to Bengal, then regarded as a penal province and described by the Emperor himself as "a hell well stocked with bread". The disgraced nobleman turned his back on the Deccan, the graveyard of his reputation, in the middle of January 1664.

By his exploit Shivaji attained instant fame as a legendary figure. His successful encounter with Afzal Khan, a man of

Herculean strength, earlier had already established his reputation as a leader of outstanding courage and resourcefulness. His latest act confirmed the widely-held belief that no physical might was strong enough to crush this remarkable man. To his own men he became a leader without a peer and could command their most implicit obedience and sacrifice in pursuit of his noble aims. To others, living away from the scene of his exploits, he became a fabulous figure invested with powers not endowed to mere mortals.

Contemporary foreign observers noted how popular imagination wove the most fanciful fables about Shivaji's abilities. "Report hath made him," recorded an English factor, "an airy body and added wings, or else it was impossible for him to be in so many places as he is said to be all at one time. They ascribe to him to perform more than a Herculean labour that he is become the talk of all conditions of people." Similar astonishment was expressed by the Portuguese in Goa, Senor da Guarda, for instance, recording his amazement at Shivaji's celerity of movement and his so-called omnipresence. The well-merited fame of Shivaji was of great value to him in meeting his powerful and unscrupulous adversaries and in frustrating their evil designs against him.

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CHAPTER 5

THE STRATEGIC RETREAT

SHIVAJI did not allow the grass to grow under his feet after his great exploit at Poona. The attack on Shaista Khan, the Moghul Viceroy, and his retirement from the Deccan in disgrace, besides constituting a great personal triumph for himself, delivered a serious blow at the prestige of the imperialists. Shivaji considered it necessary to repeat such performances with the object of exposing the myth about the so-called invincibility of the Empire until he developed sufficient strength of his own in order to be able to inflict a decisive military defeat on the enemy. The prosperous port of Surat on the west coast was among the prized possessions of the Moghuls and Shivaji's plunder of the town in January 1664, both to acquire the means for waging the war of independence and to cause further public humiliation to the imperialists, provoked Aurangzeb to take strong measures with the object of annihilating the Maratha power.

It now became clear to Aurangzeb that nothing could be more preposterous on his part than to continue to regard Shivaji as little better than a minor refractory chief, inherently incapable of offering an effective challenge to the Empire. The Maratha ruler had humbled and humiliated no less a person than the Emperor's own uncle, besides neutralising the effectiveness of the armies that had been sent against him. Jaswant Singh, the premier Rajput nobleman at the imperial court, had proved himself equally useless in dealing with Shivaji. In the context of the bitter rivalry that existed between the ruling houses of Jodhpur and Jaipur and of his own insatiable ambition to bask in the sunshine of imperial favour, as none else could ever hope to do, the aspersions cast on his integrity when operating against Shivaji, appear to be wholly unfounded. Indeed, the realization of his own inability to face the Marathas after the discomfiture of Shaista Khan was the only reason why his attempts to retrieve the situation proved so futile. His recall from the Deccan, like that of Shaista Khan, became inevitable, following the failure of his expedition.

Aurangzeb was deeply concerned about the choice of a military successor to the Maharaja. He saw that Mirẓa Raja Jai Singh of Jaipur was the only man among his senior generals who could be trusted to grasp the Deccan nettle. With a rare charm of manner, he confided to the Raja his unbounded faith in his integrity and ability to bring the southern issue to a successful conclusion. He further flattered the Rajput by declaring that in the wide Empire there were only two men who could hope to force Shivaji to go down on his knees, they being his own imperial majesty and his devoted and valiant servant, Mirza Raja Jai Singh! The Raja should, therefore, proceed to the Deccan with all expedition and bring Shivaji to the imperial court "by any means". The new appointment was announced on the occasion of the Emperor's birthday celebrations on September 30, 1664.

Aurangzeb's confidence in Jai Singh was not misplaced. The Raja belonged to a state that had become the pillar of the Moghul Empire from the days of Akbar. Indeed, he was the inheritor of the traditions of loyalty so ably established by the valiant Man Singh. Jai Singh ascended the *gadi* of Amber in 1622 when he was barely thirteen years old. From that year till his death in the south he knew no rest or respite in his service of the Empire. He was a good Hindu, but his obligation to his ancestral faith did not go beyond his personal devotion to it. He did not regard it as part of his responsibility as a premier Hindu nobleman of the realm to protect the venerable *dharma* from insult and suppression. His capacity for righteous indignation at the growing intolerance in the country had been destroyed by his early apprenticeship to the Moghul service. His own career meant everything to him and in his pursuit of personal success, he allowed no such considerations as country or religion to disturb his thoughts.

While the loss of the services of such a brilliant and valiant man to the country undoubtedly rendered it the poorer, his adhesion to the Moghul cause gave considerable strength and prestige to the imperialists, although they were none too anxious to acknowledge this fact. Jai Singh was endowed with many towering qualities. Making the Moghul cause his own, he had fought in almost every part of the far-flung Empire — from Balkh in Central Asia to Bijapur in the Deccan and from Kandahar in the west to Mungri in the east. His superb courage and resourcefulness, his mastery over military strategy and tactics and his charming address had helped him to win dazzling prizes under the Moghuls which no Hindu could expect to gain after Akbar's impartial and beneficent regime. In the campaigns abroad Jai Singh was given command of the imperial armies with a status equal to that of the Emperor's sons. And to his eminence as a warrior he added the lustre of an accomplished diplomat and linguist.

Age and experience had brought to his outlook and judgment a mellowness which helped him to realize that not infrequently diplomacy was much superior to mere force. Thus, though beginning his career as a bluff soldier, he steadily developed into a patient, subtle, soft-spoken and tactful diplomat who often used all these artful powers against the adversaries of the Empire with much success. A high-born Rajput and supremely conscious of his lineage, he had acquired complete mastery over the manners and etiquette of the imperial court so that conversation with him was invariably pleasant and instructive. His proficiency in Turki and Persian as well as in Urdu and in his own dialect of Rajasthani gave him great advantage in discussions and negotiations. It was this man, now in his fifty-sixth year and in the plenitude of his mental vigour, that was sent to the Deccan, charged with the responsibility of destroying the great work of Shivaji. He was, as Sarkar observes, "an ideal leader of the composite army of Afghans and Turks, Rajputs and Hindustanis that followed the crescent banner of the sovereign of Delhi".

There was, however, not much significance in the class composition of the army commanded by Jai Singh against Shivaji. The fighting forces of those times and of the earlier and subsequent periods were mostly composite in character, but by choosing Dilir Khan, a Pathan officer, as the second in command to the Rajput Commander-in-Chief, Aurangzeb ensured that Jai Singh did not allow the bonds of religion to interfere with his dealings with Shivaji. But such precautions, which merely gave one more illustration of the Emperor's suspicious nature, were wholly unnecessary since the Raja considered nothing more sacred than implicit obedience to his overlord's orders. In fact, at a later date, when writing from the Deccan on the Maratha affairs, he greeted Aurangzeb in his letter of June 1665 as the "shadow of God". Such a man could be trusted to carry out his responsibilities not only loyally but with ruthless thoroughness.

Collecting a large army and equipping it with the best of weapons and engines of destruction which the times could furnish, Raja Jai Singh left North India and crossed the Narmada on January 9, 1665, arriving at Aurangabad on the tenth day of the following month. During his brief stay of three days in the city he called on Prince Muazzam, who had succeeded Shaista Khan to the Deccan Viceroyalty, and, after fulfilling the formalities of the court, proceeded to his destination, Poona, the future capital of the Maratha Empire, reaching that place on March 3.

A veteran of many wars, Jai Singh was nevertheless overcome by strange misgivings about the outcome of his undertaking. Many commanders, Moghul and Bijapur, had in the past come to grief when measuring their strength with the strange and unpredictable Maratha, although some of them had possessed resources nearly as great as his own. He was unable to divine what new forces would be unleashed by Shivaji to accomplish his defeat and disgrace. He, therefore, decided to make the most comprehensive arrangements with the object of convincing the Marathas of the futility of resistance to the invaders. Reporting to Aurangzeb the progress of events in the Deccan, the Raja wrote that he allowed himself no rest or ease but laboured day and night to fulfil the task for which he had been sent. He used both sword and sabotage in his grand offensive against Shivaji and politely declined to be deflected from his carefully laid out course of action when advised by the Emperor to attack the Maratha king in the Konkan. He demanded and received supreme powers to plan and direct the campaign according to his own judgment.

There was, as we saw in the preceding chapters, a traditional and inveterate enmity between Bijapur and Delhi, the latter missing no opportunity to encompass the ruin of the Deccan Sultanate. Frequent wars were waged against it, the imperialists often carrying sword and fire to the very gates of its capital. Jai Singh was not deterred by the embittered relations between the two Governments when he urged the Adilshah to make common cause with the aggressors. He invited the Sultan to embrace the opportunity now afforded to him to settle his accounts with Shivaji by forgetting the fact that an open antagonist is always preferable to a dissembling ally. The number of men in Maharashtra who had long been biding their time to destroy the handiwork of Shivaji was by no means negligible. The Mores of Javli were prominent among such disruptionists. They, along with many other disgruntled Maratha *sardars*, rallied under the imperial banner, determined to fight for the restoration of Muslim rule in Maharashtra!

The country abounded in men of straw upon whom bribes and honours worked like an enchantment. At the same time, the prospect of tasting the sweetness of revenge drew to the Moghul standard men like Fazl Khan, the persevering son of Afzal Khan, and many other defeated and dispossessed Muslim noblemen in the Deccan. The indefatigable Rajput general was still not content with his work of sabotage and disruption. He sent two of his Portuguese emissaries to Goa to instigate their compatriots there to undertake a naval expedition against Shivaji, while the Siddis of Janjira were similarly urged to capture and ravage his coastal towns. Even Niccolao Manucci, the young artillery chief of Jai Singh's army, was not exempted from the disagreeable task of fomenting disunity and disaffection among the people of Maharashtra. He was commissioned to incite the local chiefs in the northern regions of the Maratha country to repudiate their allegiance to Shivaji. Indeed, Jai Singh spurned no method or technique that promised to strengthen his hands. He attempted to tamper with the loyalty of Shivaji's own officers by making them tempting offers, but drew a blank from that source.

Having thus created a nest of fifth columnists and saboteurs, who could be trusted to stab the valiant fighters for freedom in the back, Jai Singh set about making his military dispositions with equal thoroughness. His aim was two-fold, namely, to draw the Maratha forces into the open and overwhelm them with the aid of his superior equipment and numbers, and to neutralise the value of their hill-forts by stationing strong Moghul outposts in their vicinity. The most prominent feature of the astute Rajput's strategy lay in preventing the Marathas from taking advantage of the difficult terrain of their country. His immediate target was the famous fortress of Purandar. He moved his camp to Saswad, six miles south-west of Purandar, in order to give personal attention to the operations against the fort. The task of besieging and attacking it was given to Dilir Khan, his second in command.

The establishment of strong outposts at the strategic points around Poona and the garrisoning of the town with 4,000 cavalry effectively blocked all assistance to the defenders of Purandar, who were forced to bear the brunt of Moghul attack without any hope of receiving reinforcements or other aid. Large flying columns were regularly detailed to penetrate the countryside and to sack and burn the villages as a deterrent to any help reaching Shivaji and his men from the local population. One such flying column was directed "not to leave any vestige of cultivation or habitation, but make an utter desolation". But no excesses on the part of the invaders could weaken the determination of the garrison at Purandar to defend it to the last. As we saw in an earlier chapter, the fort is naturally endowed with considerable strength, and in those days when the siege operations were exasperatingly slow, its capture demanded almost superhuman efforts. Such efforts the Moghuls were now determined to make and the stage for the capture of the fortress was set with the arrival of Dilir Khan before it on March 30.

The garrison, which consisted of two thousand troops, was commanded by Murar Baji who, from the first day of the siege, realized the impossibility of beating off the aggressors. He knew that Shivaji, then in the Konkan, did not have the means to come to his aid or to compel the enemy to raise the siege by any other strategy. But the idea of surrender never crossed his mind. He was a typical Maratha captain, simple, brave and selfless, who had been taught to do and die for his master. It did not matter if the Moghuls were in overwhelming numbers. That fact did not deprive the garrison of its indestructible superiority which it had acquired form the determination of every trooper to lay down his life in defence of the fort. Dilir Khan concentrated his artillery fire on Rudramal or Vajragad, an independent fortified enclosure situated on a ridge running east of Purandar. Possession of this fort was of vital importance to hasten the capture of the main stronghold. Vajragad, in the words of Jai Singh, was "the key that would unlock Purandar". The efforts of the garrison to repulse the invaders were most ineffective against the pitiless cannonade of the Moghuls. Vajragad fell into the hands of the enemy on April 14.

The parlous condition of the garrison at Purandar was realized by the Maratha army outside and renewed attempts were made to force the invaders to abandon the siege. Netaji Palkar, the indomitable cavalry leader, made several diversionary attacks on the Moghul outposts, but with no conspicuous success. The fate of Purandar was sealed, but the pressure on the aggressors from the Maratha forces was not relaxed. As Jai Singh himself ruefully admitted: "Sometimes we have failed to prevent the enemy from accomplishing their hostile designs." Khafi Khan, quoted by Sarkar, is even more explicit. "The surprises of the enemy," writes this hostile historian, "their gallant successes, attacks on dark nights, blocking of roads and difficult passes, and burning of jungles, made it very hard for the imperialists to move about. The Moghuls lost many men and beasts."

But such Maratha gains did not deflect the course of events or save Purandar from passing into Moghul control.

Murar Baji's position was truly desperate. With the fall of Vajragad, Dilir Khan moved his camp to the foot of the fort, known as *Machi*, or ridge. Determined to dislodge him from his vantage position, the Maratha commander, taking seven hundred men with him, delivered a powerful attack on the Khan when the latter was climbing the hill with five thousand Afghans and other Moghul troops. A desperate hand-to-hand fight ensued in which neither side asked for or gave quarter. Murar Baji and his valiant followers slew five hundred Pathans, besides a number of other infantrymen. The intrepid Maratha leader decided not to return to the fort unless he killed the Khan himself.

Detaching sixty men from the rapidly thinning ranks of his followers, Murar Baji rushed at Dilir Khan, but, before he could reach his chief opponent, he lost one arm and the protecting shield. Despite the mortal blow, he moved forward, tying the maimed hand with a scarf. The toll of enemy life taken by him and his desperate band of followers was really terrible. Dilir Khan, himself a renowned soldier, was amazed at the courage and impetuosity of the Maratha captain and his men. He pleaded with Murar Baji to stop fighting and to join the Moghuls with the fullest conviction that his interests would be advanced by his new masters far beyond his most optimistic expectations. The Maratha spurned the offer with contempt regarding it as an affront to his patriotism and fell upon the Khan and his men with such vigour as his bleeding body could allow. Apprehending danger to his own life, Dilir Khan shot an arrow which ended the earthly career of the indomitable Murar Baji. His head was severed by the enemy, but the trunk was retrieved by the Marathas who later sent it to Shivaji for the final rites. Thus perished a great patriot and soldier and the place where he fell is known as *Ranatemb,* meaning the hillock where the battle was fought.

The death of its leader did not, however, dispirit the garrison which decided to carry on the struggle to the bitter end.

With a courage, rare in the military annals of any country, the defenders continued to hurl defiance at the invaders, declaring that the death of one man made no difference to their determination to fight. "Are we not brave like our beloved leader? Why then should we surrender?" they asked. There has never been any effective answer to the challenge of patriotism.

Shivaji, who had by now returned from the Konkan and stationed himself near Purandar, watched with deep concern the ebbing fortunes of Maharashtra. It was clearly impossible for the new State to sustain unaided the full impact of the might of the Moghul Empire. Many years of assiduous labour, devoted to the building up of new assets on a vastly larger scale, together with the creation of a wider and a more intensified national consciousness, was necessary to enable the Marathas to face the imperialists on terms of equality. He watched the plight of Purandar, one of the famous fortresses of *swarajya* with a heavy heart and the death of its commander, Murar Baji, was a personal blow to him. The great cause could ill afford to lose such brave and devoted men.

Moreover, Raja Jai Singh was most unlike the many men he had dealt with before. There was an inexorable thoroughness in all that he did so that his adversaries could find no opportunity to turn the tables on him. Appeals to his religious sentiment were worse than useless, since the Raja had transformed the worship of power and the service of the Emperor into the best form of religion. Shivaji was faced with two alternatives — either to accept dictated terms from the Moghuls or to carry on the unequal and disastrous struggle with the certain knowledge that very soon nothing would be left to him. Both courses were extremely repugnant to him, but he was a realist and appreciated the manifest imprudence of staking the future in one big gamble. He, therefore, decided to salvage as much of his kingdom as possible through a negotiated settlement, but if the Moghuls, riding on the crest of victory, spurned his offer of friendship and attempted to swallow everything he had won in the past, he would then review the position.

From the first, he made up his mind never to become a vassal of the Emperor; at the most, he would agree to hold a position analogous to the one held by Mewar in relation to the Moghuls. Should the imperialists, in their arrogance, demand a heavier sacrifice from him, he would not hesitate to make common cause with Bijapur and carry on the war against the invaders for an indefinite period.

It is possible that similar thoughts must have occurred to Jai Singh when he received Shivaji's overtures for peace. But for some time he showed no outward signs of willingness to consider them. He wished to assure himself beyond a shadow of doubt that Shivaji's offer of friendship was not a snare and a delusion. Besides, the agreement should be such as to win the wholehearted endorsement of the Emperor when alone his expedition to the south would be hailed as successful. Raghunath Ballal Atre, the astute minister of Shivaji, who had been deputed to ascertain the Moghul terms, eventually persuaded Jai Singh to receive his master and negotiate a mutually acceptable peace treaty through personal discussions. On June 11, 1665 the Maratha king visited the Rajput Commander in his camp near Saswad. He went on a peace mission and neither he nor the small group of men that accompanied him were armed. The Raja welcomed his distinguished guest cordially, but omitted no precaution to protect himself from a sudden attack! The fact that Shivaji was wholly unarmed did not abate the apprehensions of the celebrated general of the Moghuls for his personal safety. Armed Rajputs were stationed around the Raja to guard his life.

Jai Singh had made careful plans to impress upon Shivaji during his visit to the Moghul camp the futility of resistance to the imperialists. The citadel of Purandar was still in Maratha hands, but the Moghuls could now capture it at will. The final assault was deliberately delayed till Shivaji's arrival in Jai Singh's tent. At a signal from the Raja, the Moghuls renewed the offensive against the garrison, taking a toll of eighty Maratha lives. Shivaji could not bear to see the useless slaughter of his brave men and entreated his host to end the unequal fighting. At the same time, he issued orders to the valiant garrison to evacuate the fort. Thus ended the saga of the Battle of Purandar.

The terms of the peace treaty were onerous in the extreme. Twenty-three forts and the lands adjoining them, yielding an annual revenue of four lakh *hons*, were surrendered to the Moghuls, while Shivaji retained twelve forts including Rajgad, fetching an income of one lakh *hons* annually. Some of the strongholds made over to the enemy, Sinhgad, for example, had been among his most cherished possessions and had brought him power and prestige in his campaign for independence. The provisions of the agreement were indeed a bitter drench for him to swallow, but he took comfort from the knowledge that, after all, the Moghuls could not carry away the hill-forts of Maharashtra to distant Delhi. One day they would be his again. There were not many men of Jai Singh's calibre in the imperial service and, should there be a rupture in the Maratha-Moghul relations, who could prevent Shivaji from wresting back his favourite forts from the hands of the enemy?

Chief among his other commitments was his promise to render military assistance to the Moghuls in their war against Bijapur. Jai Singh did not wait long to declare war on that State, conveniently forgetting that only a little earlier he had earnestly solicited the Sultan's help to subjugate Shivaji. For his part, Shivaji fulfilled his obligations under the Treaty of Purandar by participating in the campaigns against his neighbour and long-standing enemy. It was during this period that an unfortunate estrangement occurred between him and his able and resourceful cavalry officer, Netaji Palkar, whose overbearing attitude towards his master, so unusual among Shivaji's followers, led to his dismissal. At first Netaji joined the Bijapur army and was later persuaded by Jai Singh, March, 1666, to enter the Moghul service as "commander of five thousand".

The provisions of the treaty with Shivaji were endorsed by Aurangzeb, but the transaction was most distasteful to Dilir Khan, who, true to the traditions of the Moghul nobility, could brook no equal or superior, especially when he happened to be a non-Muslim. Knowing the Khan's envious disposition, Jai Singh had persuaded Shivaji to pay a courtesy call on the Pathan leader who, for all appearances, received the visitor with the utmost warmth and cordiality. Essentially a man of the sword, he could not believe that any great cause could be won except through violence and bloodshed. He was unhappy about the peaceful ending of the Purandar siege, nor did he consider it an act of prudence to let Shivaji, the mortal enemy of the Emperor, go alive from the Moghul camp. We have the testimony of Manucci, Jai Singh's European artillery commander, that on many occasions Dilir Khan urged the Raja "to take Shivaji's life, or at least to give him (Dilir Khan) leave to do so. He would assume all responsibility and see that the Raja was held blameless." The Khan got his opportunity to work for the downfall of his superior later when the Moghul armies failed to win spectacular victories against Bijapur and when Shivaji made his sensational escape from Agra.

It is strange that Shivaji, noted for his shrewdness and circumspection, allowed himself to be persuaded by Jai Singh to pay a visit to Aurangzeb at Agra. The cruelty and the treacherous character of the Emperor had become a bye-word over the length and breadth of the country. Indeed, he regarded duplicity as an axiom of state policy. He himself wrote: "One cannot rule without deception. A government depending on cunning will last for ever." It is true that Jai Singh had given Shivaji a solemn assurance that no harm would befall him during his stay in the Moghul capital, but what sanctions could the Rajput chief forge against his overlord whom, as we saw, he worshipped as God on earth, if Aurangzab decided either to kill his enemy or to imprison him for life in an impregnable fortress like Gwalior? Indeed, both these diabolical plans were actually considered when the Maratha ruler went to Agra and one of them would certainly have been adopted if Shivaji had not made his bold escape betimes. It was impossible for the Emperor to forget Shivaji's attack on his uncle, Shaista Khan, and the sack of Surat.

Overwhelming reasons, transcending even considerations of personal safety, must have prevailed with Shivaji when he decided to undertake the journey to the north. What those reasons were cannot now be explained with any degree of certainty. A desire to study the strength and the weakness of the Moghul Government at its source and to understand the reactions of the people in the north to the oppressive regime could perhaps have been one of the reasons for his decision, but it would be straining one's credulity too much if it is urged that that consideration alone impelled him to absent himself from Maharashtra at a critical time. Nor was there any stipulation in the treaty with Jai Singh that he should meet the Emperor in person.

There is, however, no doubt that Shivaji regarded his visit to the imperial capital as one of the most fateful episodes in his career. He fully appreciated the magnitude of the risk he was taking and made arrangements for the administration of his affairs during his absence with a thoroughness that has rightly been characterized as a "masterpiece of forethought and organization." His sagacious mother, Jijabai, was appointed Regent, with Moropant Peshwa, Nilopant Muzumdar and Prataprao Gujar, the Senapati or commander-in-chief, as her counsellors in administering the realm. To ensure that the efficiency of his Government was maintained, he toured his kingdom extensively, sometimes paying surprise visits, and exhorted his officers to carry on during his absence with their customary zeal and devotion to duty. Perhaps, no better tribute can be rendered to his personality and leadership than by recalling the fact that, in spite of the grave risks and uncertainties that attended his visit to the north, the government of his territories was conducted with amazing smoothness and efficiency as though he had never been away from his kingdom

On March 5th 1666 Shivaji started on his journey to Agra from Rajgad, taking a small but efficiently equipped escort with him. He was accompanied by some of his intimate friends, including Tanaji Malusare, Yesaji Kank, Baji Sarjerao Jedhe, Hiroji Farzand, Balaji Avji, Niraji Raoji, Raghunath Ballal

Korde, Trimbak Sondev Dabir and Madari Mehtar. *En route* he visited Aurangabad where he was given an enthusiastic reception by the citizens, much to the chagrin of the Moghul Governor. That official, who had at first insolently refused to extend to Shivaji the courtesies due to a distinguished visitor, soon discovered his mistake and made appropriate amends so that cordiality was restored between the two before the Maratha party left the city. During his journey Shivaji received a letter dated April 5 from Aurangzeb promising him a warm reception at his court. Shivaji and his escort reached the outskirts of Agra on May 11.

The following day, May 12, was an eventful day for Aurangzeb. Since the incarceration of his father in 1658 and his death on January 22, 1666, the Emperor had not ventured to visit the city. He had, therefore, decided to make his first entry after so many years memorable by holding a magnificent *Darbar* in the Agra palace on May 12 in celebration of his fiftieth lunar birthday. The resplendent peacock throne had been refurbished for the occasion, while one thousand four hundred carts had been employed to transport the treasures of the imperial household from Delhi. The Governors and the feudatories of the realm had been directed to attend the ceremonial and to rejoice at the might and majesty of their paramount lord. It was the special wish of Aurangzeb that Shivaji should witness the imperial splendour so that he might realize, if he were so faint-hearted, his own "smallness".

But the stars in their courses ordained otherwise. Kumar Ram Singh, the son of Mirza Raja Jai Singh and his agent at the court, who was in charge of the arrangements for Shivaji's stay at Agra, was, through a series of mishaps, unable to conduct the Maratha king to the imperial palace till late in the afternoon of the *Darbar* day, although he had arrived near the city the previous day. Without any rest or relaxation, without any opportunity to collect his thoughts or to adjust himself to the new surroundings, and oppressed by the midday heat of the Agra sun, Shivaji was virtually hustled into Aurangzeb's presence at *diwani-i-khas* or the "hall of select audience".

Nevertheless, Shivaji showed no vexation or resentment at the treatment meted out to him and extended to the Emperor all the honours and courtesies due from one sovereign to another, offering him the presents he had brought from the Deccan. Aurangzeb, who had shown such eagerness to meet the Maratha hero and who had promised to give him a reception worthy of his eminence, did not condescend even to make a gesture of recognition. Shivaji waited in vain for a word of goodwill and friendship. To add insult to injury, he was conducted to an inconspicuous place in the hall and asked to stand in the row of second-rate nobles of the Empire.

The pride of Shivaji was deeply wounded. In front of him he saw the backs of many *Sardars,* some of whom had been worsted by him on the field of battle. If Aurangzeb had organised the *Darbar* to "dazzle the eyes of the world with his grandeur and wealth", it is evident that the particular kind of reception he had arranged for Shivaji was intended to humiliate him in public. Both by his upbringing and in his outlook Shivaji did not attach much importance to the gradations and hierarchies in the society. He had lived and moved with the simple-minded hillmen of Maharashtra, heartily sharing their frugal fare and enjoying their humble but generous hospitality. No change in his position or fortunes could deflect him from that democratic and fraternal attitude. But humility, derived from an innate nobility of the mind, is as different from servile submission to insult as heaven is from earth.

The great avenger of injustice could, on no account, acquiesce in any affront to his dignity and honour. He was roused to anger and, summoning Ram Singh to his presence, called his attention to the undeserved treatment that had been meted out to him, despite the fact that both his father and the Emperor knew well his status and standing as an independent sovereign. Anxious to avoid further insults to his person, he walked out of the hall of audience, at the same time leaving no doubt in the minds of the assembled nobles and others how deeply he resented the Emperor's calculated act of discourtesy. Aurangzeb, who had been watching the scene created by his

Deccan adversary with an observant eye, welcomed it, as it gave him one more pretext for planning Shivaji's destruction. The fact that his trusted lieutenant, Jai Singh, had given Shivaji the most solemn guarantees concerning his personal safety while at Agra, did not in the least affect Aurangzeb's designs. In the estimation of this cruel man, who had won the throne through violence and treachery, what was an obligation to an opportunity?

Apart from Aurangzeb's own wicked disposition, powerful forces had long been at work to poison his mind against Shivaji. Maharaja Jaswant Singh believed that he had sound reasons for persuading the Emperor to destroy Shivaji. The failure of his expedition in the Deccan and Shivaji's openly-expressed derision at his military incompetence had deeply offended the Maharaja's *amour-propre*. Perhaps, even more galling to his pride was the outstanding success of Mirza Raja Jai Singh in the south which contrasted sharply with his own dismal record. The enmity between the ruling houses of Jodhpur and Jaipur was long-standing, bitter and irreconcilable.

It is a melancholy fact of history that the inter-Rajput rivalry played no small part in strengthening the Muslim power in the north. Distinguished for their valour and chivalry, the Rajput princes could achieve anything but unity amongst themselves. The reasons, if there had really been any, for the sustained antagonism between the ruling dynasties of Jaipur and Jodhpur could on no account have been of such overwhelming importance as to warrant their permanent estrangement. Students of Maratha history are well aware of the utter puerility of the differences that divided the House of Scindia and Holkar in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, thus causing them to default criminally in the fulfilment of their obligations and responsibilities to the Maratha Empire. The Rajputs under the Moghuls, like the Marathas under the Deccan Sultans, considered no pursuit worthier than the service of their masters whose smiles and favours they courted and welcomed like manna from heaven.

Shivaji's second adversary was Jafar Khan, the Prime Minister, whose wife was the sister of Shaista Khan, the man who had lost his fingers, wives and sons in his encounter with the Maratha king at Poona. The infuriated woman never allowed a moment to be lost in persuading her husband to intrigue for Shivaji's downfall, while another influential lady in the imperial palace made unceasing efforts to achieve the same results. Jahanara, the powerful sister of the Emperor, was deeply offended at the sack of Surat which had deprived her of her normal customs revenue from that port. The opportunity was too good to be lost for wreaking a terrible vengeance upon Shivaji.

Shivaji knew the gravity of his peril and was left in no doubt about his future when armed guards were posted around his residence. But, however desperate the situation, he flatly refused to see the Emperor again. Indeed, he had an unconquerable aversion for bowing his head before any temporal authority, although he was ever so willing to prostrate himself before pious men. The utmost concession he made during the period of his duress at Agra was to allow his little son, Sambhaji, who had accompanied him, to visit the palace and wait upon the Emperor.

But he abated no efforts to secure his early release from Moghul surveillance. He addressed frequent requests to Aurangzeb to permit him to return to the Deccan so that he might advance the cause of the imperialists by co-operating in their campaigns against Bijapur. He tried various other methods towards this end, including his plea to the high dignitaries to intercede on his behalf. But on every occasion he drew a blank. He tried one more expedient. He asked the Emperor to allow him to go to holy Banaras and to spend the rest of his life there like a recluse. With a cynicism worthy of his sinister nature, Aurangzeb replied: "Let him turn a *fakir* and live in the fort of Allahabad where my officers will take good care of him!" In those days the fortress of Allahabad, like the forts of Gwalior, Asirgarh and Daulatabad, had won notoriety as a place of life-long detention for state prisoners.

In dealing with a pitiless and unscrupulous tyrant Shivaji soon realized the futility of prayer and petition. He must devise his own plans to secure his emancipation from the Moghul duress. It was characteristic of this dauntless and resourceful man that adversity invariably stimulated his mind, with brilliant successes following closely his gravest disasters. During the period he was not making plans for his escape he employed his enforced idleness in studying the Moghul system closely so that, on his return to the Deccan, he might give it a vigorous push towards dissolution.

Shivaji saw that the Government of Aurangzeb rested on injustice and iniquity. We have already discussed at length the religious bigotry of the Emperor. No religion claimed his respect, not even Islam as practised by sects other than his own. The Bohras, according to Sarkar, "have a tradition that their spiritual guide, Sayyid Qutb-ud-din of Ahmedabad, was killed with 700 of his followers by order of Aurangzeb". The inveterate hostility of Aurangzeb and his father to the Sultanates of Bijapur and Golkonda was largely due to the profession of the Shia faith by their rulers. The Sufi philosophers, with their broad-minded outlook, were equally stigmatized and persecuted by the gladiatorial Emperor as the heretics of Islam. Even the simple and eclectic faith of the Sikhs, founded by the great pacifist, Baba Nanak, was not spared the hammer-blows of Aurangzeb whose truculence played no small part in transforming the Sikhs into a militant fraternity. Thus, an overwhelming majority of the population, comprising the entire Hindu, Sikh and Christian communities, and a sizeable section of the followers of Islam, outside the narrow circle of the Sunni sect, were victims of unbridled religious oppression. To belong to the creed of the Emperor, therefore, came to be regarded as an especial privilege, its adherents behaving as if they were heaven-born.

The religious policy of the Government was thus grossly unjust and the injustice was vastly aggravated by the imposition of the hateful *jaziya* tax on the Hindus in 1679 in order, it was asserted, to "spread Islam and put down the practice of infidelity", Shivaji, who had by this period acquired sufficient strength to face the Moghul aggression without flinching, took the lead in addressing a letter of remonstrance to the Emperor. Drafted by Nila Prabhu, his Persian Secretary, the protest read: "It has recently come to my ears that, on the ground of the war with me having exhausted your wealth and emptied your treasury, your Majesty has ordered that money under the name of *jaziya* should be collected from the Hindus and the imperial needs supplied with it."

Recalling the growing impoverishment of the country, the letter declared: "Your peasants are downtrodden; the yield of every village has declined — in the place of one lakh of rupees only one thousand, and in the place of one thousand only ten are collected, and that too with difficulty.... It is a reign in which the army is in a ferment, the merchants complain, the Muslims cry, the Hindus are grilled; most men lack bread at night.... How can royal spirit permit you to add the hardship of the *jaziya* to this grievous state of things? The infamy will quickly spread from west to east and become recorded in books of history that the Emperor of Hindusthan, coveting the beggars' bowls, takes the *jaziya* from Brahmins and the Jain monks, *yogis, sanyasis,* paupers, mendicants, ruined wretches, and the famine-stricken — that his valour is shown by attacking the wallets of beggars — that he dashes down to the ground the name and honour of the Timurids!"

Reminding the bigot that all great religions are one, Shivaji goes on to say: "If you believe in the true Divine Book and word of God (i.e. the Quran), you will find there that God is styled as the Lord of all men and not as the Lord of the Muhammedans only....To show bigotry for any man's own creed and practices is equivalent to altering the words of the Holy Book. To draw new lines on a picture is to find fault with the painter. In strict justice, the *jaziya* is not at all lawful.... But to oppress ants and flies is far from displaying valour and spirit." The spirited protest concludes: "I wonder at the strange fidelity of your officers that they neglect to tell you of the true state of things, but cover a blazing fire with straw!" (Sir Jadunath Sarkar's translation.) It is not known what effect the letter produced on the Emperor, but it certainly yielded no results. Aurangzeb's mind had long been sealed against considerations of prudence and humanity.

The second most egregious blunder of Aurangzeb was his inaccessibility to all counsels of moderation and fairplay. Akbar was a despot, but he deferred to the advice of wise men whom he encouraged to influence his ideas and ideals and to guide the policies of his government. But Aurangzeb was cast in a different mould and was congenitally incapable of sharing his confidence with others. He was intensely suspicious and never knew the quality of gratitude. All despotisms are hateful because they are a potent instrument for the debasement of man. But autocracy under Aurangzeb was utterly insufferable. In the Moghul polity, kissing the feet of the Emperor was regarded as a unique privilege! Aurangzeb demanded that the entire country should crawl before him in abject servility.

Besides, Aurangzeb's absurd idealism gave rise to a good deal of sanctimonious humbug. He hated music and drinking and tried to banish both from his realm. He made futile attempts to promote chastity through legislation, failing to realize that reform can succeed only when it becomes an organic part of the society's outlook and adaptability. "All the cultural development of Islam," says a writer, "all its philosophy and gaiety and grandeur of soul, meant nothing to him."

The kill-joy Emperor thus became an unwitting instigator of dishonesty and dissimulation. Manucci records that there were few persons who did not drink secretly and that "even the ministers and *Qazis* loved to get drunk at home. Gambling continued to be practised in his camp, and his order to all the courtesans and dancing girls to marry or leave the realm remained a dead letter". Thus, from the year of his usurpation of the throne till his unlamented death in 1707, this suicidal man drove the country remorselessly to the brink of ruin by adopting bigotry, oppression and impractical idealism as the triple principles of his statecraft. During his stay at Agra

Shivaji saw and heard sufficiently to confirm his belief in the vulnerability of the Moghul system.

Great courage, imagination and planning were necessary to ensure Shivaji's escape from the clutches of the imperialists. As weeks melted into months, the restriction on his movements became far more rigorous than those of a mere house arrest. Perhaps, he could manage to leave the house unnoticed, but a vast sub-continent, policed by a hostile government, stretched between him and the place of safety. His retinue was not large, but as a party in flight it was too big to escape detection. Moreover, it was dangerous for him to share the secret of his intentions with many. He, therefore, secured permission to send the bulk of his escort back home — a course of action that was heartily welcomed at the court which believed that by depleting the number of his adherents, Shivaji had unwittingly made himself even more helpless.

Shivaji's plan of action was bold and simple and it succeeded admirably precisely for the same reason. For some weeks he had confined himself to bed announcing indisposition. Prolonged treatment, rest and prayers for his early recovery were considered necessary to ensure his return to good health. Large baskets containing sweetmeats were sent out of his house daily for distribution among Brahmins, mendicants and courtiers. The number of such baskets, slung on poles and carried by porters, increased with each day. The guards' devotion to duty by searching every container did not long survive the tedium of the task. Little did they imagine that the baskets could become an excellent receptacle for conveying the great state prisoner from thraldom to freedom. In blissful ignorance of the fateful consequences of their carelessness and not realizing that, with Shivaji at large, there would be a most significant change in the course of Indian history, the easy-going guards allowed the baskets to move out freely without inspection.

On the afternoon of August 19, 1666,* Shivaji and his son, Sambhaji, entered a pair of baskets and were promptly conveyed to a place of safety outside the city. There, on a lonely spot, he was greeted by his faithful followers who had made perfect arrangements for his onward journey to Maharashtra. The small party split into two, the king being accompanied by his young son, Niraji Raoji, Datta Trimbak and Raghu Mitra. Shivaji, who had acquired consummate skill in putting on an infinite variety of guises, concealed his identity and that of his party by donning the robes of wandering mendicants and proceeded to the great pilgrim centre, Mathura.

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* Sardesai gives a different date.

At Agra his trusted officer, Hiroji Farzand, who had taken his place in the house, never left the "sick-bed" the whole of that day. He somewhat resembled Shivaji whose signet ring he wore to complete the deception about his real identity. The guards, who had been instructed not to disturb the "patient" on any account, left him in peace with no doubt or suspicion crossing their minds, especially when they saw the familiar ring on his finger. Hiroji left the bed on the following morning and, admonishing the watchmen to be considerate towards his "ailing" chief, made his exit from the house never to return.

A strange silence fell over the house, which, only a few days earlier, had been humming with activity. The guards became suspicious and their worst fears were soon confirmed when they failed to see the prisoner in his place. Their frantic search for Shivaji proving abortive, they rushed to the police chief, Siddi Fulad, who had been commissioned by the Emperor to be in charge of the Maratha king's detention, and broke the astounding news to him. Bewildered and shaking with fear, the unfortunate officer promptly reported the incident to Aurangzeb, asserting that Shivaji had made his escape with the aid of occult powers. The astute Emperor did not, of course, allow himself to be taken in by any such absurd explanations and ordered an immediate despatch of search parties in all directions. By then Shivaji had gained a lead of fourteen hours.

Shivaji made his escape not a day too soon. More than three months had elapsed since his arrival at Agra. Aurangzeb had by now made up his mind to seal the fate of his adversary. He abandoned the original project of sentencing Shivaji to life-imprisonment in the dungeon of a fortress because he knew that so long as his enemy lived he would continue to torment his thoughts. Death was the only fitting reward to the Maratha for his temerity in unfurling the flag of independence.

But Aurangzeb must commit this diabolical crime without risking popular odium. The north-west frontier was in a ferment. It was decided that Shivaji and Jai Singh's son, Ram Singh, should accompany the punitive expedition against the tribesmen. A Muslim officer, called Radandaz Khan was directed to join them with secret instructions that the Maratha king should be killed at a convenient time and place on the way to the north-west frontier. The man was a specialist in perpetrating such atrocities. Pending preparations for the distant expedition, Shivaji was to be removed soon to another house from where escape would have been impossible. This carefully nurtured plan, however, went hopelessly awry by his timely flight. Providence could not have dealt a more staggering blow to the evil-minded plotters.

In planning the route of his journey from Agra to Maharashtra Shivaji showed the same depth of perception as marked his escape from the city. He threw the Moghul hordes in his pursuit off their scent by proceeding to the north instead of the south. Mathura was his immediate destination, which he reached safely with his son and followers within six hours. Both on account of his tender age and the greater risk of detection with him as a companion of the fugitives, Sambhaji was left behind in the holy city in charge of a Brahmin family from Maharashtra. The boy was later restored to his parents after the commotion caused by the escape had died down. Shivaji shaved off his beard and moustache to complete his disguise and, taking his trusted men with him, proceeded eastwards to Allahabad. From there the route of his journey lay through Bundelkhand, Gondwana and Golkonda. On September 12, 1666 he reached Rajgad where his mother was in residence.

Shivaji's home-coming, after an absence of more than six months, was an event of historic importance and of great rejoicing throughout the Deccan. Fervent thanksgiving prayers were offered from thousands of temples and from the tabernacle of millions of hearts on his safe return. In the eyes of his mother, whom he pleasantly surprised by appearing before her in the garb of a *sanyasin,* it was a virtual rebirth. His unique exploit increased the respect and admiration of his people for him tenfold. Only he and none else, they rightly believed, could have won his deliverance from the stranglehold of the wily Emperor and eluded the vigilance of his alerted minions. Shivaji noted with supreme satisfaction that the high standard of his administration had been maintained during his long absence from his realm. Not a single Maratha officer had succumbed to the seductions of the Moghul service, thus demonstrating to the misguided careerists in the country that it was impossible to set any price on patriotism.

Aurangzeb never forgave himself over Shivaji's escape. The episode haunted his dreams till the end of his life in 1707. Reflecting on it philosophically, he expatiated on the need for a government to keep itself fully informed about the happenings in its realm, since failure to do so would be suicidal. Shivaji's escape, he lamented, would involve him in wars and vexations till the end of his life. His immediate reaction was, however, to seek a scapegoat. He found one in the unfortunate Ram Singh, an innocent man, whom he denounced as a traitor, stripped him of all his honours and estates and forbade his attendance at the court. In the extremity of his despair and anger, he failed to realize that no son of Mirza Raja Jai Singh would venture to deviate from the path of loyalty to his person and throne.

The plight of Jai Singh in the Deccan was even more pitiable. With an astonishing disregard for the solemn promise he had given to Shivaji, he refused to rejoice at the Maratha king's emancipation from the clutches of his unscrupulous master. Nothing mattered to him more than his own prestige and influence at the court, despite his knowledge of the faithlessness of the Emperor. Shivaji's escape, the disgrace of his son and his own failure in the campaign against Bijapur presaged the end of his career as, to quote his own words, the "slave of the court." One cannot write about this man without a heavy heart. By virtue of his eminent qualities and the opportunities that came his way, he should have striven for a place with patriots like Shivaji and Rana Raj Singh of Mewar, but he chose the easier path of service and personal advancement under a government and a master both of whom were dominated by narrow-minded bigotry.

Jai Singh's letter to Jafar Khan, the Moghul Prime Minister, reveals how even an honourable man can sink to incredible depths of degradation by taking a distorted view of his responsibilities and obligations. It was, of course, impossible for him to apprehend Shivaji by any means, but, at the behest of his lord and master, he captured Netaji Palkar, who had already joined the Moghuls, and sent him a prisoner to Delhi. The misguided and impetuous Maratha was converted to Islam, circumcised and called Muhammed Kuli. He was used as a mercenary and served in Afghanistan for ten years till his escape from Moghul thraldom and return to his former master, Shivaji, in May 1676. The sad man, who had perhaps grown wiser after his experience in the north, was soon reclaimed to his ancestral faith.

Jai Singh did not long survive his humiliation. A lone and tragic figure, he found escape from his grief and misery in death which overtook him at Burhanpur on August 28, 1667 while on his way to Delhi, posing a problem to the historian in determining his place in history. His exit was, however, of much value to Shivaji who knew that it was impossible even for the Moghul Empire to nurse more than one man of Jai Singh's calibre.

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CHAPTER 6

THE CROWNING ACHIEVEMENT

SHIVAJI's escape from Agra in September 1666 marked the beginning of a new era in Maharashtra and indeed in the whole of India. His safe home-coming gladdened and galvanized his people to an extent that no other event could have done. The great deliverer was back in their midst to lead them to victory against misrule, oppression and intolerance. His sensational escape thrilled millions of his countrymen in other provinces, and those that had banded themselves together to overthrow the imperial yoke watched his subsequent activities with deep interest and expectation. Shivaji had, however, to act with great caution. Some of the important strongholds of Maharashtra were in the hands of the enemy and were being guarded by competent and vigilant commanders, although no fortress could long remain in hostile possession so long as the inhabitants in the surrounding regions were animated by sentiments of patriotism and by a willingness to make any sacrifice for the common cause.

Shivaji, therefore, prudently avoided an open conflict with the Moghuls soon after his return from Agra. Following his arduous and nerve-shattering journey, he was in dire need of rest. Besides, after his long absence from his people, it was necessary for him to understand their temper and their preparedness for another trial of strength with the imperialists, which was likely to be more bitter and prolonged than the previous struggle. The next campaign would necessarily have to be directed towards winning back the ceded hill-forts, which certainly was not a small undertaking. Time was also required to repair the damage done to his realm by Jai Singh's victories which had greatly contracted his territories and resources. Every consideration of prudence thus demanded that he should remain at peace both with the Moghuls and the Bijapur Government till the right time for action came.

Shivaji could afford to bide his own time, especially after Jai Singh's death. Under Prince Muazzam's viceroyalty of the Deccan, there was a manifest disinclination on the part of the Moghuls to renew the hostilities against the Marathas. With his customary astuteness Shivaji wrote a conciliatory letter to Aurangzeb, explaining that his precipitate departure from Agra was prompted solely by his fear for personal safety and not out of any desire on his part to provoke a conflict with the Emperor. Whether Aurangzeb, a consummate practitioner of the art of cunning and duplicity, was mollified by such gestures from his mortal foe is doubtful, but he made a virtue out of necessity by outwardly accepting Shivaji's offer of friendship and co-operation.

In the administration of his charge Prince Muazzam was assisted by Maharaja Jaswant Singh, who shared his master's partiality for the seductions of sloth and self-indulgence. Both were fond of the chase and organized frequent *shikar* expeditions. They certainly did not subscribe to the Emperor's enthusiasm for renewing hostilities against the elusive and indomitable Marathas. And when Shivaji made his peace offer, they eagerly grasped his hand of friendship, eventually persuading a reluctant Emperor to endorse their action. Peace thus prevailed between the Marathas and the Moghuls from 1667-69, although discerning men on both sides could see that no durable understanding was possible so long as the most vital region of Maharashtra remained under alien control.

Shivaji, who had observed the weakness of the Empire at the source, now found his conclusions confirmed by the squabbles among the Moghul imperialists in the Deccan. Dilir Khan, who had accompanied Jai Singh to the south as his second in command and who survived him, was not endowed with any estimable accomplishments except the lone virtue of courage as a soldier. He was ambitious, jealous, truculent and treacherous and was indeed a typical representative of the

Rohilla clan which continued to figure in Indian history even after the dissolution of the Moghul Empire.*

Dilir Khan had won the confidence of the Emperor by proving false to his superior, Jai Singh, which policy he practised even against Prince Muazzam. He wrote to Aurangzeb denouncing his son as a traitor. Deliberately misconstruing the relations between the Prince and the Marathas, he complained that Muazzam was in collusion with Shivaji with the wicked object of usurping the imperial throne. The Emperor did not dismiss the charge as the fabrication of a spiteful man since his own conscience never forgave him for a similar crime. The Khan's estrangement from Jaswant Singh was complete and nothing could bring the two men together.

The Emperor was in a quandary since both his son and his Rajput lieutenant repeatedly accused Dilir Khan of insubordination and of arrogant behaviour. To ascertain the truth, which had been obscured by the recriminations of his quarrelling officers, Aurangzeb sent his own Chamberlain to the Deccan with directions to find our whether it was really the Khan or the Prince who was contemplating a rebellion against the Government. The investigator was a wise Galileo who fully understood the dangers and the thanklessness of his undertaking. He, therefore, hummed and hawed, prevaricated and reported nothing worthwhile to his master. At the same time, in an attempt to please both the factions, he only succeeded in deepening their mutual enmity! As a contemporary English observer wrote: "He played the Jack on both sides, and told the Prince that Dilir Khan was his enemy, and went to Dilir Khan and told him that the Prince would seize on him if he came to Aurangabad." Sarkar, who quotes this passage, adds: "His unfortunate advice to Dilir only prolonged the tension."

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* The Rohillas made common cause with the Afghan invader, Ahmed Shah Abdali, and fought against the Marathas in the famous Battle of Panipat in 1761. Their treacherous behaviour was never forgiven by the southern highlanders who lost no opportunity of invading their territory that lay in the tract that runs along the base of the Himalayas from the river Ganga eastward upto the confines of Oudh. The foreigners had succeeded in imposing their sway over the local population whom they exploited with ruthless thoroughness for their own glory and gratification. They were, to quote an authority, "naturally turbulent, treacherous, cruel and warlike" and it was said of them that "they pray with one hand and rob with the other". *(Selections from the State Papers of the Governor-General of India: Warren Hastings,* edited by G. W. Forrest, Vol. I (1910), page 67). In April 1774, their leader Rahmat Khan, was defeated and killed in battle by the combined armies of the Nawab of Oudh and the East India Company. The surviving Rohilla State of Rampur was absorbed into India's wider unity after independence.

Muazzam's persistent attempts to prejudice the Emperor's mind against Dilir Khan at last succeeded. An order was sent to the Viceroy to arrest the contumacious Khan and "bring him back to the path of obedience". Forestalling the imperial directive, Dilir fled in panic northwards to Malwa. It was a suicidal move of which his enemies took full advantage. The Prince and Jaswant Singh went in pursuit of him, at the same time inviting Shivaji to come to their aid. This sordid episode furnished the most convincing proof of the growing imbecility of the Moghul counsels in the Deccan. Thinking men began to wonder whether the feud among the imperialists was not in fact a prelude and a dress-rehearsal for a full-scale civil war. The Emperor's timely intervention, however, saved the situation, though only temporarily.

The trouble with the Moghuls, as all who had eyes to see could observe, was that their Empire was rapidly heading for its dissolution. It had long passed the pinnacle of its glorious achievements. Neither its vast armies, representing a museum of diverse nationalities, nor the wealth of its grandees, nor the splendid palaces and mausoleums of the Emperors, could conceal the mortal disease that had seized the Moghul body politic. The decline in the moral and spiritual power of the realm was noticed by contemporary observers even during the reign of Jahangir. The demoralization was far more pronounced under the government of Aurangzeb whose morbid fanaticism and amazing ignorance of the economic consequences of his interminable and costly wars, hastened the process of disintegration.

A rupture in the relations between the Moghuls and the Marathas was inevitable. The Emperor's disrespect for the religion of the land angered the Hindus all over the country. Jijabai, the pious and spirited mother of Shivaji, considered the destruction of the Vishweshwar temple at Banaras as a wanton affront to Hindu manhood. Sardesai holds that she played no small part in influencing her son's decision to renew hostilities against the Moghul bigot and tyrant. Shivaji's dignified rebuke to the Emperor, composed in a language worthy of his high purpose, provides one more example of how all thinking sections in the country felt revolted by Aurangzeb's excesses and cruelties.

Apart from these religious considerations, Shivaji could clearly see the growing distractions of the Empire. Soon after his departure from Agra, the Moghul troops were deployed to the Punjab to guard the province against an apprehended invasion by the Shah of Persia. Indeed, the unhappy Aurangzeb had little respite from trouble and vexation. The chronically agitated North-West Frontier erupted in March 1667, compelling the Moghuls to rush their troops to Peshawar. The fact that the turbulent tribesmen refused to bow their head before the monarch of their own faith bore no lesson to the bigoted Emperor.

It is a measure of the embarrassed state of the imperial treasury that Aurangzeb ordered the recovery of the trifling sum of one lakh of rupees that had been advanced to Shivaji for financing his journey to Agra ! The bare thought that, in compliance with the agreement concluded with Muazzam, a Maratha contingent had to be maintained at the expense of the Moghuls even in the distracted condition of their finances, caused deeper anguish to the Emperor. As a Maratha chronicler records with disarming candour, *jagirs* had been assigned to the Marathas in the Moghul territories so that their troops could "feed themselves at the expense of the Moghul dominion".

It was characteristic of Aurangzeb that he attempted to end the embarrassing commitment by having recourse to his favourite device of treachery. He issued secret instructions to his son to secure Shivaji's arrest — a tall order indeed ! Since that was impossible, he directed that Shivaji's son and his generals should be held and used as hostages. The Prince was repelled by the want of scruples in his parent and, being apprised of the Emperor's intentions in advance, he advised the Maratha commanders, Prataprao Gujar and Niraji Raoji, then in his camp at Aurangabad, to leave in haste for their homes. The miscarriage of his plan caused deep disappointment to the Emperor who, however, took such comfort as he could from the fact that the *jagirs* in the imperial territory were no longer available to the Marathas for nourishing their armies of independence.

The uneasy peace of 1667-69 gave place to an open war in early January 1670 or a fortnight earlier. The Marathas were now eager and poised for action. The fact that such strong hill-forts as Sinhgad and Purandar, were under enemy occupation, far from dispiriting them, gave an impetus to their zeal for winning back the famous strongholds from the Moghuls. The Queen-Mother, Jijabai, strongly desired to see her favourite land cleared of the invaders, and her merest wish was a command to her devoted son. The loss of the Lion Fort, in particular, had caused her much anguish and the mettlesome lady, who had now grown old, considered no sacrifice too great in order to recapture it for the national cause.

The story of the reconquest of Sinhgad is one of the most stirring episodes in the history of the Marathas and will be narrated in greater detail in another chapter. The fort was guarded by a famous Rajput warrior, Uday Bhan, who could be dislodged from his strong position only by a superior display of skill and courage. Both these qualities were shown in an abundant measure by Tanaji Malusare and his loyal Maratha troops who captured the fort on February 4, 1670. In the battle that was fought inside the fortress, both the Maratha and Moghul captains lost their lives.

The next major target of the Maratha offensive was the equally famous fort of Purandar, which had stubbornly defied the concentrated artillery strength of the Moghuls during the previous war. The valiant garrison, led by the indomitable Murar Baji Prabhu, had demonstrated to the enemy that, despite the disadvantages of limited resources and poor weapons, the Deccan highlanders were capable of rising to great heights of military skill and enterprise. The manner of Murar Baji's death was, as we saw, as inspiring as it was grand. The fort was now guarded by a Moghul commander, called Raziuddin Khan, who was unable to resist the great Maratha offensive of 1670. The resourceful Nilopant and his men captured both the fort and its commander on March 8, thus burying the unwanted Treaty of Purandar many fathoms deep.

Confident of the justice of their cause, aware of the growing infirmity of their adversaries, and recognising the salutariness of the military doctrine that attack is the best form of defence, the Marathas decided to strike at the enemy in his own territory. In a raid on Chandwad near Nasik, they captured a sizeable amount of imperial treasure which was of great value in financing their war against the invaders. The attack on Mahuli in north Konkan, fifty miles from Bombay, was less successful at the outset, but the courageous Rajput keeper of the fort, Manohar Das Gaur, surrendered his charge on June 16, realising that no help could be expected from his Government. The Marathas won a resounding victory against the Moghuls in the first week of March when they recaptured the important towns of Kalyan and Bhiwandi, both near Bombay, after putting the Governor, a Khan from the north, to the sword. Thus, within a few months of commencing the hostilities, Shivaji succeeded in removing all traces of Moghul occupation of north Konkan. By the end of April, his armies penetrated deep into the imperial territories, levying heavy contributions from such large towns as Junnar, Ahmednagar and Parenda.

The Marathas attacked Surat for the second time, October 3, 1670, and carried away property worth sixtysix lakhs of rupees.

Reports of the sack deeply wounded Aurangzeb's pride. He often toyed with the idea of descending upon the Deccan in person, but did not leave the north for many years, either on account of his growing distractions there or, as the historian of the Marathas suggests, as a result of the realisation of his own inadequacy in meeting a resourceful and determined antagonist. He was able to invade Maharashtra only after Shivaji's death. He, however, sent some of his ablest generals, Muslim and Rajput, against his enemy, empowering them to draw freely upon the resources of his Empire to ensure the success of their undertaking.

Prince Muazzam shared his father's fury and humiliation at the sack of Surat and sent urgent orders to Daud Khan Qureshi, a veteran officer, to intercept the Marathas on their return journey. The Marathas had a numerically superior force and were led by such renowned captains as Prataprao Gujar, Vyankoji Datto and Makaji Anandrao. Daud Khan fell upon them near Dindori in the Nasik district.

The advantage derived by the Marathas from their numbers was almost neutralised by their responsibility for the safe transit of the large treasure taken from Surat. Shivaji, however, rose to the occasion. Dividing his force into several columns, each under the command of an experienced officer, he engaged the enemy in an elusive warfare, while a strong detachment escorted the wealth to safety through a secret pass. After making these arrangements, Shivaji led the charge in person against the Moghuls, inflicting heavy casualties on them, the number slain being estimated at three thousand. Four thousand horses were captured, together with many important Moghul officers. The latter were, however, later sent home with presents. Siddi Hilal, the Moghul Governor of Dindori, transferred his services to the Maratha Government. The Battle of Dindori, October 17, 1670, paralysed the power of the Moghuls in the Deccan for some time — a situation of which the Marathas took full advantage.

Like Bismarck, the great German Chancellor of the 19th century, Shivaji was by temperament one whom life consumed but rest killed. Action was his forte, of which he gave repeated proofs to his opponents. He struck another blow at the imperialists in December by personally leading an army into the rich province of Khandesh. His troops sacked Bahadurpura, a suburb of Burhanpur, the capital of Khandesh, and suddenly fell upon the wealthy city of Karanja, which yielded to the Marathas property worth one crore of rupees. Thenceforward Khandesh became one of the principal sources of revenue to the Government of Maharashtra for financing the maintenance and expansion of its army. It was at this time that *chouth,* the famous system of collecting one-fourth of the revenue, was levied by Shivaji.

The Maratha incursions into the Moghul territories went almost unchallenged, the local commanders finding it increasingly difficult to stem the tide of the invasion. The Emperor, however, accepted no such defeat and appointed Mahabat Khan to the southern command, with emphatic directions to wage a pitiless war against the enemy with the one and only intention of destroying them. Mahabat Khan, who arrived in Aurangabad in January 1671, was given Daud Khan as his second in command, while other famous military leaders like Maharaja Jaswant Singh and Dilir Khan, were ordered to co-operate with the new chief. But the concept of concerted action among the Moghuls had long before dissolved into an unrealisable dream. The nobles of the Empire were so pre-occupied with their own prestige and personal ambitions that they had become totally incapable of rising above that sordid level. Daud Khan, for instance, regarded his position under the new commander as derogatory to his dignity and military prowess and appealed to Aurangzeb to recall him!

Despite his personal distinction as a soldier, Mahabat Khan was not a large-hearted man. He burned with jealousy when the honours of an engagement with the Marathas were annexed by Daud Khan, whom he despised as the commander of a mere "five thousand". The rains were exceptionally heavy in 1671 and the Moghul camp at Parnera was struck by a virulent pestilence which took an enormous toll of life. But Mahabat Khan was totally unmoved by the catastrophe. The fact that large numbers of his troops and cattle perished from disease, thus seriously weakening his military strength, neither ruffled the equanimity of this strange man nor abated his appetite for carnal pleasures. "While his troops were dying," says Sarkar, "Mahabat Khan attended daily entertainments in the houses of the nobles by turns. There were four hundred dancing girls of Afghanistan and the Punjab in his camp, and they were patronised by his officers. Such callous indifference to human suffering, such excessive addiction of the leading men of the Government to ignoble pursuits, and such criminal dereliction of duty on their part inevitably led to the eventual dissolution of the Empire.

Some of the Moghul commanders added cruelty to the catalogue of their misdeeds. Dilir Khan's massacre of all the citizens of Poona above the age of nine in December 1671, as if such insensate atrocity was a substitute for victory on the field of battle, furnished one more example of the growing demoralisation of the Moghuls. The great and, for the Marathas, the epoch-making action before Salher in the first week of February 1672 proved beyond a shadow of doubt that the halcyon days of uninterrupted victories for the imperialists in their wars against their opponents were now over.

The Battle of Salher was a major trial of strength between the Marathas and the Moghuls, with some of the most famous generals ranged against each other as belligerents. Prataprao Gujar, Moropant Pingle, the Peshwa and Anandrao Makaji were among the well-known captains that led the Maratha army. Both sides fought with reckless courage, unmindful of casualties, and determined to win or die on the battlefield. After an obstinate struggle, the imperialists were decisively defeated, many of their senior officers falling into the hands of the Marathas. Commenting on the battle, Sarkar writes: "Ikhlas Khan and Muhakam Singh (the son of Rao Amar Singh Chandawat) were wounded and captured with thirty of their principal officers, while Rao Amar Singh and many other commanders as well as several thousand common soldiers were slain, and their entire siege-camp was taken by the enemy".

The Peshwa, who played an outstanding part in the battle, soon recaptured both Salher and Mulher and, after providing for their defence, hastened to his master to report the resounding victory of the Marathas over the enemy. Sardesai quotes at some length, Sabhasad's enthusiastic account of the famous action. The success of the Marathas, says the chronicler, was mainly due to the strategy and valour of Shivaji's Peshwa, of whom a contemporary poet sang :

"The valleys of Poona echo the name of Shivaji,
There roams his dauntless Peshwa,
He slaughtered the Mughals of Salher
Just as Arjun slaughtered the Kauravas of yore."

Sabhasad further writes : "The Maratha captains and the Mavla troops overcame the most renowned Mughal commanders. The news rejoiced Shivaji's heart. He rewarded the messengers of the glad tidings with gold bracelets and wristlets. Sweets were widely distributed. Dilir Khan saved his life by flight. A large number of the wounded Mughals fell into Shivaji's hands. They were properly nursed and released with presents after recovery. Some willingly accepted Shivaji's service".

The impression made by the Maratha victory at Salher on contemporary foreign observers was equally profound. According to the English records of that period, Shivaji "forced the two generals (that is, Bahadur Khan and Dilir Khan), who with their armies had entered into his country, to retreat with shame and loss".

Grant Duff, who describes the battle in some detail, observes: "This victory was the most complete ever achieved by Shivaji's troops in a fairly fought action with the Moghuls and contributed greatly to the renown of the Marathas. Its immediate consequence was the abandonment of the siege of Salher and a precipitate retreat of the army to Aurangabad." The British historian also mentions the nobility and the generous attitude of Shivaji towards the captives and says that he "treated the prisoners of rank, who were sent to Raigad, with distinction, and, when their wounds were healed he dismissed them in an honourable manner. Such prisoners as chose to remain were admitted into his service; and deserters, both from the Bijapur and the Moghul armies, began to join the Maratha standard in considerable numbers."[1]

It was characteristic of Aurangzeb that he failed to see the signs of the times by attributing Maratha success to the treachery of his own trusted and highly-placed officers. His bigoted mind and warped outlook exempted none from his all-embracing suspicion. He mistook Mahabat Khan's ineffectiveness for collusion with Shivaji, which was an entirely baseless assumption. The unfortunate commander-in-chief, who was recalled, left the Deccan for the north in May 1672, leaving the vacant office to be held by Bahadur Khan. The conquest of the Koli territory by Moropant Pingle in the same year gave the Marathas "a short, safe and easy route from Kalyan upto Northern Konkan to Surat and laid that port helplessly open to invasion from the south". Bahadur Khan's combined office of viceroy and commander-in-chief, held by him till August 1677, produced no outstanding results in favour of his Government, both he and Dilir Khan, the latter in charge of Gujarat, being constantly under pressure from the exultant Marathas.

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[1] Dennis Kincaid writes: "Mahabat Khan, the Moghul Commander, was sent to reduce Shivaji to submission. Early in 1672, in a long, confused battle outside Salher town, the Moghuls were first held and then broken by a brilliant cavalry charge. Only two thousand men from the Moghul army escaped. Twenty thousand fell in battle or surrendered." (*The Grand Rebel*, by Dennis Kincaid, 1937, p. 268).

Kincaid and Parasnis write that a last vigorous charge by the Marathas completed the Moghul defeat and that only 2,000 men escaped from the rout. "6,000 horses, 125 elephants and a vast spoil of jewels and treasure became the prize of the conquerors. But the gain in prestige was greater still. For the first time the Marathas had won a pitched battle against a disciplined Moghul army, led by a soldier trained in the school of Akbar and Shahjahan". (*A History of the Maratha People* by C. A. Kincaid and D. B. Parasnis, Vol. I, 1918, p. 235).

Bijapur, like its counterpart in the north, was on its last legs. The death of its penultimate ruler, Ali Adilshah, on November 24, 1672 gave his self-seeking nobles a great opportunity to advance their own interests, to the detriment of the kingdom. Sikandar, who succeeded Ali, was only four years old and became the plaything of a coterie of ambitious and faction-ridden *sardars.*[1] In the manoeuvre for power an Abyssinian general called Khawas Khan double-crossed his other accomplices and became the regent of the boy king. The State, the internal cohesion of which had already been seriously undermined by the implacable hostility between indigenous and imported Muslims and by the sullen resentment of the majority community over its fallen condition, was no longer able to withstand the attacks of the Marathas and the invaders from the north.

Shivaji certainly did not let go the great opportunity of benefiting his new kingdom from Bijapur's growing distractions. Panhala was among his favourite forts and was ideally situated for the protection of his southern province. Its restoration to the Bijapur Government in 1660 to avoid war on two fronts was a hateful transaction to which he had never reconciled himself. His preoccupations with the imperialists had given him no opportunity to recover it.

The time was now propitious for restoring Panhala to the galaxy of Maharashtra's famous fortresses. He put Annaji Datto in command of a small army consisting of men wellversed in the scaling of fort walls. Annaji requisitioned the services of a courageous and resourceful man called Kondaji Ravlekar whose plan of action for the capture of the fort was as ingenious as it was bold. He sent inside the fort a small group of Marathas in disguise, with instructions to win over the garrison secretly to Shivaji's cause and took upon himself the most perilous and daring task of entering the stronghold by climbing its walls from the steep hill-side with the aid of rope-ladders. Sixty adventurous Marathas shared the glory in performing this memorable exploit. Kondaji's feat at Panhala reminds us of a similar brilliant episode in the eighteenth century when Colonel Popham of the East India Company covered himself with glory by his escalade of the impregnable fortress of Gwalior, which unnerved even such a great soldier as Mahadji Scindia.

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[1] Aurangzeb's pitiless war against Bijapur ended its separate existence in 1686. In October of that year his army stormed and captured the capital, the Emperor entering the city in triumph. Sikandar was caught and detained in his former capital after being stripped of all the insignia and dignity of royalty. The Emperor granted him an annual allowance of one lakh of rupees. The deposed ruler did not long survive his humiliation and died some years later "not, as reported, without suspicion of having been poisoned by order of the Emperor". *(Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency—Bijapur,* Vol. XXIII, 1884, pp. 435-36).

Panhala is a big fort and on the day of its capture, March 6, 1673, it was garrisoned by a large force under the command of Babu Khan. To create the illusion that a large number of Marathas had entered it, Kondaji and his men produced a mighty commotion inside the fort by blowing trumpets and other noisy instruments and by shouting at the top of their voices, in which diversionary strategy they were heartily joined by the party that had entered the fort earlier in various disguises. Before the bewildered garrison could recover from the surprise, the main gates of the fort were thrown open so that the Maratha troops that had been waiting outside rushed into the fort, shouting the famous war-cry *Har Har Mahadev,* and put to the sword all men that opposed them. The keeper of Panhala, Babu Khan, was killed and his deputy put to flight. A vast treasure fell into the hands of the victors. It was a great day for Shivaji and his cause. The ease with which the stronghold was captured confirmed the widely held belief that the Marathas were indeed unique in this mode of warfare. Shivaji promptly visited Panhala to congratulate and reward his valiant comrades and to make permanent arrangements for its administration. Soon afterwards, Satara and Parli were wrested from the Bijapur Government. The fort of Parli was donated to Ramdas Swami and was renamed Sajjangad, meaning the Fort of the Pious.

Despite its intestinal quarrels and the indolence and dissipation of its members, the ruling class of Bijapur was stung to the quick when Panhala, the pride of the kingdom, fell into Shivaji's hands. Fearing dismissal from his office if he failed to retrieve the situation, the regent ordered Bahlol Khan and three other experienced officers to proceed against the Marathas. Before the Bijapur generals could combine, Shivaji, with his customary alacrity, struck the first blow, thus totally upsetting the enemy's carefully-prepared plan of action. He sent an army of 15,000 strong under the command of Prataprao Gujar, Anandrao and other competent captains, with directions to attack Bahlol Khan before his troops had made much progress from the capital. The Marathas barred the advance of the Bijapur army at a place called Umrani, thirty-six miles west of the Adilshahi capital, and made a lightning attack on the enemy, at the same time cutting off his water sppply. The battle raged fiercely the whole day on April 15, 1673, when a large number of the Afghan troops were killed.

Defeat stared the Bijapur commander in the face, but he was saved from a terrible fate by the intervention of darkness. The Marathas were never in doubt about the outcome of the issue, but when they woke up the following morning, they were astonished at the spectacle presented by the battlefield. The enemy had vacated it under cover of darkness, with the approval of the Maratha general, Prataprao. He was misguided by Bahlol Khan's simulated entreaty for generous treatment. The Khan revealed his real intention by renewing the hostilities soon after his strategem had freed him from a dangerous situation. Shivaji was furious when he heard of his commander-in-chief's ill-judged generosity and, besides severely rebuking him, directed that he should not return to his master unless he made amends by seeking out the Bijapur commander and defeating him.

Stung to the quick by the unwonted severity of Shivaji, Prataprao went in pursuit of the Khan and, overtaking him at the pass of Nesari near the Ghataprabha river, fell upon the Bijapur army, not with his entire force, but with only six or seven men! Even the most merciful Providence could not have condoned such wanton recklessness. The great general, the victor of many battles and a distinguished comrade of Shivaji, was cut to pieces, with all the men that had accompanied him (February 24, 1674). The disheartened Maratha army was, however, promptly rallied under the command of the fallen general's lieutenant, Anandrao Makaji. Shivaji was amazed and stricken with grief when he heard of Prataprao's death and reproached himself for causing the tragedy by exhibiting hasty temper against such a mettlesome warrior. At a grand review of his troops, held at Chiplun on April 8, he appointed Hansaji Mohite to the vacant office of Commander-in-Chief, investing him with the title of Hambirrao.

Dilir Khan, the Rohilla general of the Moghul Government, was, like his master, incapable of seeing the writing on the wall. He still cherished the illusion that Maharashtra could be reduced to submission with the same success and thoroughness as had distinguished Jai Singh's campaigns in the Deccan. The proud Pathan was unwilling to descend from his dreamland and face the realities of the changed situation. He timed his invasion of the Konkan at the same time as the Bijapur generals launched an attack on Shivaji for the recovery of Panhala. Dilir Khan's foolhardy adventure ended in his defeat and humiliation. A contemporary letter by English merchants, written at the end of January 1674, presumably refers to this discomfiture of the Khan in the Konkan. "Dilir Khan," it reads, "hath lately received a rout by Shivaji and lost 1,000 of his Pathans, and Shivaji about five hundred or six hundred men." Not long after this episode, the Khan's career in the Deccan came to an end. He was recalled by the Emperor and posted to the north-west to fight the insurgents of the Khyber region. Bahadur Khan, who held a rapidly disintegrating viceroyalty, was left to fend for himself in the Deccan.

Shivaji was now at the height of his glory. For years, countless legions and famous commanders had been sent in vain by the Moghuls and by the Sultans of Bijapur to defeat him. His fame as an unconquerable hero and as a chivalrous foe had spread far and wide. His justness and benignity in the administration of his State and his devotion to sacred causes and to holy men had won him a reputation as an ideal ruler. To the valiant men in the rest of the country, struggling for emancipation from tyranny and misrule, he became, as we shall see in the appropriate place, a source of inspiration and an exemplar. The time had, therefore, come that he should be appointed as the sovereign of Maharashtra.

Both by upbringing and by outlook, Shivaji believed in the substance of power and not in the gauds and glitter that surround it. He loved to live as his comrades from the hills and the Konkan did, without any pomp and luxury, simply, vitally and purposefully. Indeed, as the historian Orme points out, "his life was simple even to parsimony; his manners void of insolence or ostentation". But his own predilections were not of much importance when weighed against considerations of policy and propriety. On the issue of his coronation, he anticipated that unique Corsican, Napolean, who became the Emperor of France, assuming the attributes of sovereignty more out of policy than from his own volition. "What is a throne?" asked Napolean, and answered, "a piece of wood covered with satin!" And yet he chose this piece of little used but costly furniture to sustain the majesty of his power. Commenting on Napolean's decision to crown himself, his biographer, Emil Ludwig, says: "Indeed, the glamour of the throne is stronger, and therefore he will take the establishment of his throne more seriously than he took the foundation of the Legion of Honour. It is an instrument of policy, a means for the management of men. In the real world, where no one can call familiar spirits to his aid, the private person, the poet or the philosopher, can raise his head heavenward without bearing the burden of a crown; but the statesman needs the insignia of power, for the dull populace cannot believe in the reality of power unless he who wields power wears the insignia."

If a nineteenth century France, which had earlier boldly and decisively proclaimed the paramountcy of liberty, fraternity and equality as the basis for the government of human affairs, thus causing mortal terror to the crowned heads of Europe, found it necessary to invest one of its citizens with the insignia of sovereignty after deliberately destroying the previous occupant of the throne, it was far more essential that the new realm of Maharashtra in India should have a king. Obviously, the anomaly of a kingdom without a duly anointed ruler to govern could not be allowed to persist.

Besides, in India, as in many other countries, the institution of kingship was nearly as old as her civilization. Most of the old treatises on statecraft insisted on government by king as the only system most conducive to the stability of society. The dread of anarchy had played a prominent part in investing the occupant of the throne with divine rights and honours. A manual on government insisted that the first choice of a man should be his king and then his wife, for "without a king in the world where would wife and property be?"

It is true that the same law-givers laid down that, since the main purpose of government was to establish order, the king, as the head of the administration, should regard himself as the first social servant. But to the common people, who could not be expected to understand the abstract principles of political philosophy, the king became an object of profound respect and veneration, since he was a pre-eminent symbol of stability and protection. Indeed, the concept of kingship had been so firmly woven into the very texture of the people's beliefs that it often warped the judgment of even the most enlightened and sagacious men.

But no king had the right to obedience if he was a tyrant and an oppressor. It was in fact the duty of responsible citizens to ensure the removal of a bad ruler, but this right was seldom exercised and fell into disuse under Muslim rule. Government by a minority was an insufferable affront to the dignity, the honour and the interests of the majority, but, besides the political and military weakness of the Hindus, the spectacle of the ruler being a crowned personage played no small part in their acquiscence in Muslim rule. It is for this reason that Mirza Raja Jai Singh, an outstanding Rajput of his time, did not regard it as a personal debasement when he supplicated himself before Aurangzeb as "the slave of the court".

Shivaji was both shrewd and sagacious in realizing the political and psychological value of the glittering and expensive headgear. The territory he had won was still small, but the value of his conquest was incalculable. It was necessary to carry on his great work, and continuity of succession, with the consent of the people, could best be ensured by his becoming a king. His successors would inherit a sovereignty which in capable hands could perhaps eventually extend to the whole country. Even if some of them proved ineffective, they could always be guided by competent men, once the line of succession was firmly established. The sovereignty of the House of Shivaji thus offered the best guarantee of stability to the administration of Maharashtra.

Besides, the crowning of Shivaji would strike the imagination of the Hindus throughout the country. It would herald the coming of an age when they could confidently hope to regain their heritage, not for their exclusive enjoyment or gratification, but in order to share it in full measure with the rest of their countrymen. His coronation would mark the end of the dismal and defeatist belief that the Hindus could never be independent rulers of their land and thus pave the way for the establishment of more normal and harmonious relations between the two great communities. At the same time, it would fill the enemies of the new State with despair that it was no longer possible to supplant it.

Finally, Shivaji's assumption of the insignia of royalty would thoroughly expose the hollowness of the pretensions of the Maratha *mankaris* or nobles, some of whom, like the Mores, disdained to regard him as their equal, despite the fact of their unqualified subordination to the Muslim rulers. All their attitude of arrogance and effrontery and all their supercilious behaviour towards him would end once he became both the *de facto* and *de jure* monarch of his realm. At least, the more discerning ones among them would realize, though belatedly, that the kingdom of Shivaji was a source of inspiration and a rallying-point to the Hindus all over the country, symbolizing the revival of India's great and glorious traditions of the past. After the Rayas of the Vijayanagar Empire. no Hindu ruler had chosen to ascend the throne with all the solemn ceremony and circumstance that had marked the accession of the great sovereigns of old. To Shivaji belonged this distinction.

The historic ceremony was held at Raigad, the new capital of Shivaji. Originally called Rairi, it was conquered from Chandrarao More in 1656 when it was without any fortifications. Situated on a lofty and an almost inaccessible plateau, Raigad, with its spaciousness and strategic position, was in every way qualified to become the capital of the new State — a distinction which had long been enjoyed by Rajgad near Poona. In his description of Raigad Dr. Fryer says: "It is fortified by nature rather than art, there being one avenue to it, which is guarded by two narrow gates, and fortified by a strong wall exceeding high and bastions thereto. On the mountain are many strong buildings, as the Raja's court and the houses of other ministers."

It was in this place that Shivaji ascended the throne on Saturday, June 5, 1674. It was a great and glorious day for Maharashtra and, in the eyes of all discerning persons, for the whole of India. At Raigad elaborate preparations had been made for months to celebrate the event with splendour and solemnity. Cool, clean and beautiful, the hill-city, with its stately palaces and mansions, glowed with festive gaiety. It played host to thousands of persons, consisting of men, women and children drawn from different parts of Maharashtra and from outside.

Men known for their learning and piety mustered strong to bless the new monarch. The great Ramdas Swami, that uncompromising apostle of Hindu revival, was present to witness the realization of his dream for the establishment of righteousness in this ancient land. The Queen-Mother, Jijabai, was overwhelmed with joy at the crowning of her beloved son. Dignitaries from various parts of the country had assembled in the capital to witness a spectacle the like of which had not been seen for centuries. Among the guests was Henry Oxenden, a relative of the chief of the East India Company's factory at Surat, who has left behind a vivid eyewitness account of the coronation ceremony.

Shivaji exercised great judgment in the choice of the officiating priest. Visweshwar or Gaga Bhat of Banaras, whose ancestors originally belonged to Paithan in Maharashtra, was a distinguished scholar and had made a profound study of the Vedas and other sacred texts of the Hindus. He effectively silenced all orthodox opposition to Shivaji's enthronement by quoting chapter and verse from ancient authorities in its support. The assumption that only the so-called Kshatriyas were entitled to anointment as sovereigns was as absurd as insistence on the primacy of caste. Long before the birth of Shivaji it had been conclusively proved by history that not all the great monarchs of ancient or mediaeval India belonged to the Kshatriya or Rajput race. The Sungas and Kanvas were Brahmins, as were many other dynasties. We have the testimony of Hiuen Tsang that the great Harsha was a Vaishya, while the Nandas, and perhaps even the Mauryas, sprang from castes other than the first three. Indeed, the rational aphorism "whoever bears rule is a Kshatriya" was applied and, after the lapse of some generations, royal families from the so-called non-*dwija* castes were quietly assimilated into the Kshatriya or warrior class.

Armed with such incontrovertible facts, the scholarly priest from Banaras duly installed Shivaji on the throne with all the ceremonial appropriate to the occasion. Gaga Bhat enjoyed unrivalled prestige as "the greatest Sanskrit theologian and controvertialist then alive, a master of the four Vedas, the six philosophies, and all the scriptures of the Hindus" and was in fact acclaimed as the most learned man of the age. With such an outstanding authority presiding over the Raigad ceremonies, Shivaji's assumption of the insignia of royalty was assured of wide acceptance.

Enormous sums of money were spent during the festivities that began many weeks before the main event. Thousands of guests, Brahmins and others, were fed daily with sumptuous fare. Gifts were given freely to learned and holy men and to thousands of others. Shivaji was weighed in gold, totalling 16,000 *hons* or one hundred and forty pounds, and the entire money was given away in charity. The throne, variously described as "magnificent" and "rich and stately", cost the exchequer fourteen lakhs of rupees. Estimates of the total expenditure differ, but according to one calculation, as much as fifty lakhs of rupees was spent on the occasion. Orthodoxy forced on Shivaji a second coronation, though on a minor scale, the date of the superfluous ceremony being September 24, 1674.

The enthronement of her son marked the fulfilment of the most cherished ambition of Jijabai, who died on June 18, 1674, thirteen days after his coronation, full of happiness at her great good fortune.[1] Shivaji was stricken with grief at the death of his mother and the fact of her advanced age did not mitigate the anguish of his bereavement. Jijabai was not an ordinary mother; she was his guardian angel, a wise counsellor and an unfailing source of inspiration. This remarkable lady, who had all the grace and temper of a lioness, brooked insult from none, whether the offender was her own father or husband. And yet her devotion to her family was profound and unshakable.

Jijabai was indeed a woman who was many steps ahead of her times. She had the vision, the patriotism and the pertinacity in training her son for the exalted mission of liberating the country from misgovernment and thus won the admiration of posterity as the woman who influenced the course of history. She was an emancipated woman and her progressive outlook played no small part in reclaiming some of the prominent Maratha converts to Hinduism.[1] By her masterful personality and zeal for noble causes, she became a model of Maratha womanhood. Her example in courage and fortitude was followed in her own family by the widow of her grandson, the celebrated Tarabai, who, after the death of Rajaram, took up the cause of Maratha independence against the Moghul armies, with astonishing tenacity and resourcefulness. In the death of his mother, Shivaji lost the mainstay of his life.

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[1] Shahaji, her husband, had died earlier, on January 23, 1664 at Basavapattana in Mysore State.

While the Marathas were preoccupied with the festivities connected with the coronation, the Moghul Viceroy, Bahadur Khan, attempted to encroach upon their territories in the hope that his aggressions would go unnoticed. The imminence of the monsoon had further persuaded him that the Marathas would not be able to adopt any prompt retaliatory measures. In this, as in many other things when dealing with his Deccan enemies, he was thoroughly mistaken. Shivaji had not sheathed his sword by merely putting the crown on his head. The throne was for him not a soft cushion of indulgence but a stern seat of duty. Once he was free from the ceremonies at Raigad, he renewed the campaign against the Moghuls. At the height of the monsoon he made, in the middle of July 1674, a feigned attack on the Moghul camp at Pedgaon on the banks of the river Bhima and lured away Bahadur Khan some distance from his base. His ill-defended cantonment was promptly attacked by another Maratha force, seven thousand strong, and the entire treasure and equipment of the enemy were captured. The victorious Marathas carried away one crore of rupees, besides two hundred excellent horses, collected specially for the imperial stable at Delhi.

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[1] Netaji Palkar, who had been converted to Islam and remained a Muslim for many years, was readily taken back into the Hindu fold after the performance of a purificatory rite on June 19, 1676. Shivaji, who re-admitted him to his confidence, would perhaps not have countenanced such a significant social reform if he had not learnt to appreciate and admire his mother's catholic outlook. Many years earlier, Bajaji Naik Nimbalkar of Phaltan, who had been forced to embrace Islam, was reclaimed for his ancestral religion at the instance of Shivaji and his mother. (*New History of the Marathas*, by G. S. Sardesai, Vol. I, 1957, p. 131)

The discomfiture of the ill-starred Moghul commander did not, however, end there. Shivaji knew the Khan's frame of mind. In order to save his face, he would grasp any opportunity to come to terms with his adversary so long as they did not smack of abject surrender on his part. The Maratha king deliberately threw out peace feelers and entered into long drawn out negotiations with the Khan who once again fell to the bait. He succeeded in securing the Emperor's *farman* endorsing the so-called peace terms when Shivaji had no intention whatsoever of making any concessions to the enemy. When it was no longer necessary to continue the futile negotiations, he dismissed the Moghul envoys by reminding them that the very ineffectiveness of their master ruled out the possibility of any accommodating gesture from the Marathas.

The unfortunate Bahadur Khan made many abortive attempts to forge a military alliance with Bijapur for chastising their common enemy, but the vitality of that state was fast ebbing away. In November 1675 the regent, Khawas Khan, was dislodged from his position by Bahlol Khan, who was far too pre-occupied with his own distractions to be able to take any effective action against the Marathas. Aurangzeb, whose hatred for Bijapur was nearly as great as his hostility to the Marathas, ordered his viceroy to attack the tottering Adilshahi State. On May 31, 1676 Bahadur Khan launched a vigorous offensive against Bijapur — an act of aggression which forced the new regent to implore Shivaji's assistance against the imperialists.

That was precisely what Shivaji had been waiting for. He would certainly help Bijapur — but at a price. The negotiations between the two states were conducted through the good offices of the Golkonda minister, Madanna. The treaty provided for the payment of an annual subsidy of one lakh *hons* to the Maratha Government by Bijapur in return for military assistance against the imperialists. The agreement also stipulated that the Adilshahi Government should pay an additional sum of three lakhs of rupees to the Maratha King at the time of its signature.

The fact that Bijapur's "subsidiary alliance" with Shivaji did not long survive the vicissitudes of its politics does not alter the significance of the compact. Both in its historical perspective and in the eyes of his contemporaries, Shivaji's success in exacting a tribute from the proud masters of his father gave a true indication of his greatness. The rupture that soon took place in the relations between the two states caused him no regret. His mind was now set on a great adventure and he refused to be deflected from his new goal by the imbecilities or the caprices of the Bijapur Government. He had undertaken the invasion of the South, described as the "greatest expedition of his life".

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CHAPTER 7

THE HISTORIC EXPEDITIONS

(i) SURAT

IN A detailed analysis of the factors that favoured the establishment of British dominion in India, *The Oxford History of India* gives great prominence to the possession of enormous resources by the East India Company. The British had certainly many other advantages over their Indian adversaries. They enjoyed an unchallenged naval supremacy which gave them an unrestricted access to the Indian shores; their armies were disciplined, better equipped and competently led; and their policy-makers and empire-builders in India were gifted not only with a wide-ranging vision, but also with a high sense of purpose. Even so, great as these assets were, they would not have been of much avail in winning an empire for the British in India unless they enjoyed the decisive advantage that accrues from the ownership of large and assured sources of income.

The armies of the Company *Sarkar* did not consist of supermen and yet the legend of their invincibility gained the widest currency in the country. A palpable myth was accepted as a fact, essentially because the Company Government had an almost unlimited capacity to replace losses and to pay and maintain troops regularly. None of the Indian powers that were ranged against it was capable of such a financial feat. The revenues of even the Great Moghuls were not large enough to match the resources of the British in India. Reference has already been made to the grave financial embarrassment of Aurangzeb which compelled him to adopt a policy of retrenchment and retraction in the Deccan. The East India Company was the beneficiary of its country's expanding economy based on a developing trade. Later, England attained phenomenal prosperity as she began to realize the abounding fruits of the industrial revolution. It is a fact of great historical significance that, while the annual revenues of Akbar during whose reign the Moghul Empire rose to the pinnacle of its glory, amounted to about 17½ million pounds, the realizations of the East India Company in 1792 from a much smaller and war-ravaged territory were well over 8 million pounds a year. *The Oxford History* clinches the issue when it says: "Britain, for all her paucity of numbers, was in fact stronger in resources than any one Indian power and equal to all of them put together. When it is remembered that the Indian powers never were united, the success of the British ceases to seem either extraordinary or unaccountable."

These preliminary observations are necessary in order to help us appreciate the *raison d'etre* of Shivaji's ceaseless quest for money without which the success of his great undertaking could not have been assured. As we saw in an earlier chapter, he set out on his mission with no worthwhile means at his disposal. In fact, the revenues from the impoverished and devastated Poona district, his mainstay for many years, amounted to the meagre sum of 40,000 *hons* a year. His raids into the enemy territories were thus prompted by the compelling necessity of acquiring sufficient means for sustaining and strengthening his war of independence. His first major incursion into the Moghul dominion with this well-defined object was made in January 1664 when the city of Surat was sacked.

Surat was, as it still is, a large, populous and prosperous city in Gujarat. It was the premier emporium of the East and a prized possession of the Moghuls. In 1608, when the English began to trade with that city, it was of "considerable size, with many good houses belonging to merchants". The fortunes of Surat bore a striking resemblance to the rise and fall of the Moghul dynasty. It enjoyed uninterrupted prosperity for about eighty-five years during the reigns of Emperors Akbar, Jehangir and Shah Jahan, winning praise as a bright jewel in the diadem of the Moghuls. Noted for the industry and enterprise of its population, it rode on the crest of prosperity, gathering immense wealth within its precincts through its wide-ranging commercial interests.

It was a beautiful city, with extensive gardens and orchards spreading for miles around it, yielding a rich harvest of flower and fruit. The gardens, it has been recorded, were "continually refreshed with curious springs and fountains of fresh water", evidently drawn from the river Tapti. Apart from its pre-eminence as a port of international importance, Surat had acquired added importance as the "gateway" to the Muslim holy places in Arabia. Indeed, it was a city where every prospect pleased, but only man was vile, that man being not the common man. Its decline set in with the commencement of the disastrous rule of Aurangzeb whose bigotry and misgovernment hastened the general impoverishment of the country. Stagnation gradually gained ascendancy over its commercial and civic life, eventually relegating its glory to the pages of history.

At the time of Shivaji's raid Surat presented the spectacle of a city bristling with striking contrasts. The wealthy members of the business community, some of whom were reputed to be among the richest in the world, lived in large and well-appointed mansions near the river, maintaining a rigid social and physical distance from the noise, the squalor and the wretchedness of the town where the majority of the population lived, laboured and died. The fort of Surat was strongly built and was situated on the southern bank of the river, twelve miles from the sea. The city, which lay close to the fort, had no natural or artificial fortifications to assist in the defence of its immense wealth. The city and the fort were under the control of two separate and mutually exclusive authorities.

It was a measure of the growing feebleness of the Moghul Government that, although Surat was regarded as a prized possession, little care was exercised in the choice of officers for governing it. At the time of Shivaji's invasion, the city was under the governorship of an irresponsible and cowardly man called Inayat Khan. His capacity for self-aggrandizement was unlimited. He regularly drew from the imperial treasury the money sanctioned for maintaining an armed force of five hundred men, but appropriated the entire or the bulk of the amount for his own use! The Government was too remote, too corrupt and too disorganized to chastise such dishonesty.

Presumably because of its immense, undefended wealth, the curse of Cain sat heavily upon the city. The corruption, the venality and the inefficiency of the Government put a premuim on lawlessness. The irreconcilable rivalry among the European traders, having commercial interests in the city, added to its civic distractions. The special trading facilities received by the English from Emperor Jehangir in 1612 had deeply offended the Portuguese and their other European rivals. "In 1630," says a writer, "the English and Portuguese fleets fought a respectable battle in that roadstead (namely, Surat), without prejudice to international relations at home." Indeed, the European settlers in Surat were not obsessed with excessive scruples when it came to the question of exploiting the helplessness of the city. Nothing that happened in it, however, served as an eye-opener either to the Moghul Government or to the opulent business community, neither of whom took adequate steps for its defence.

Shivaji knew these facts intimately. His secret agents, by whom he was served with admirable thoroughness and fidelity, had brought him detailed and accurate information about Surat and its exposed condition. He had no intention of annexing the city or of storming the stronghold. Nor did he propose to attack the European factors in the city, for, apart from other reasons, their warehouses could not obviously yield much portable wealth. He bore no ill-will towards them and certainly did not despise their friendship. Besides, at that early period, there was no reason for him to apprehend any serious competition from them for political power in the country. The sack of Surat was thus intended by him primarily to gain larger resources for the war of independence and secondarily to raise an inferno in the breast of Aurangzeb by staging such a daring defiance of his authority.

From the intelligence that was brought to him Shivaji was convinced that he would be able to realize the maximum reward if he surprised Surat by suddenly appearing before it

Towards this end he made careful preparations with the utmost secrecy. He chose 4,000 men and mounting them on fleet-footed horses started on the momentous expedition from Nasik on January 1, 1664. His cavalry sped past Mahuli, Kohaj, Jawahar and Ramnagar and the entire army of invasion reached Gandevi, 28 miles from Surat, on the fifth day of the month. The surprise was complete and the news of Shivaji's proximity to the city caused much consternation to its inhabitants. On the same night he sent word to the Governor, Inayat Khan, asking that he should call on him with three influential merchants of Surat to settle the amount of the ransom to be paid to him.

Taking into account his need and the nobility of the cause he had set out to defend, Shivaji's demand on the city was quite moderate and reasonable. He asked that a sum of fifty lakhs of rupees should be paid to him and promised to hurt none if the stipulated levy was delivered promptly. Surat teemed with affluent men some of whom were incredibly wealthy. Had they cared to make a collective contribution, the resulting sacrifice would certainly not have been heavy. The city was unfortunately bereft of men capable of giving right advice and the Governor, who should have set an example in statesmanship, happened to be cowardly and treacherous. Having received no response to his summons to the city's representatives, Shivaji marched towards its vicinity on the morning of January 6, pitching his tent in a garden close to the eastern gate. By then the Governor had fled to the nearby fort, leaving the frightened inhabitants of Surat leaderless.

With a drawn sword in hand, Shivaji entered the city on January 6, being compelled by the ill-judged non-co-operation of its leading men to take from its inhabitants by the only means now open to him what he had offered to accept as a voluntary contribution from them. His instructions to his men were strict—they should on no account resort to avoidable violence. Cosme da Guarda, a contemporary of Shivaji, who lived at Marmagoa and wrote about the Maratha King in 1695, records that nobody's life was in peril because "it was the strict order of Shivaji that unless resistance was offered no one should be killed" and adds that since none resisted, none perished.

The city, however, suffered terribly mostly on account of the foolish behaviour of the commandant of the fort, who believed that the Marathas could be scared away by indiscriminately opening artillery fire on the crowded town. Here is a contemporary account of the consequences of the garrison's thoughtless and precipitate action, given by Barthelemy Carre, a Frenchman, who arrived in Surat in 1668: "The two governors could not but be pensive in their despair, their only care being how to hide themselves and the more valuable things they possessed. They were swayed by their interest and avarice which made them override the dictates of duty. At last the governor of the castle opened artillery fire upon the town. He shot at random and if it was to a certain extent fraught with danger to Shivaji's soldiers, it rendered the destruction of the people of Surat most certain. The cannon demolished their houses and set them ablaze at the same time that the enemy despoiled them of their furniture and emptied their stores." The Marathas did not, of course, carry away unwieldy and cheaper goods. The thoughtless firing from the fort took a heavy toll of life and property as most of the streets of Surat were narrow and crowded and as the majority of the houses were built of inflammable material.

The sack of the city lasted for four days. Except for the misery and suffering which such proceedings inevitably inflicted upon the inhabitants, Shivaji and his men were not guilty of excessive cruelty or vandalism. His innate nobility and genuine feeling for his fellow-men were too strong to give place to unbridled oppression or avarice. As Thevenot, the Frenchman who visited Surat exactly two years after its sack, records, Shivaji showed the utmost consideration to the Christian population and willingly granted it immunity from harm at the solicitation of Father Ambrose for whom he bore the greatest respect. Bernier, another impartial contemporary chronicler, corroborates this tribute to the Maratha King's catholicity of outlook. "The Frankish padries," Shivaji is recorded to have declared, "are good men and shall not be molested."

Indeed, the general attitude of Shivaji towards the Europeans in India was one of friendliness so long as they did not presume to interfere in his affairs. He himself set an example in non-interference by maintaining an attitude of benevolent neutrality in their chronic rivalries. It is not, therefore, surprising that during his raid on Surat he did not, as Cosme da Guarda has observed, "look at the English and the Dutch factories".

Some rather fantastic fables have been adroitly passed off as facts of history by extolling the so-called heroic stand supposed to have been taken by the English factors against the Maratha troops. Nothing can be more absurd than the suggestion that Shivaji was afraid of attacking the East India Company's factories at Surat out of a wholesome respect for their prowess. As contemporary evidence so decisively proves, he was not interested in any such proceedings for the simple reason that the European warehouses were not and could not be the repositories of much wealth. It was impossible for a man who had drawn his sword against the Moghuls to be frightened by the bellicosity of a handful of foreign traders who had still not ventured to abandon their stores in favour of the sceptre. Of the Maratha King's warlike abilities, the Surat factors themselves wrote: "Shivaji has forced most generals who with their armies had entered into his country to retreat with shame."

The sack of Surat proceeded leisurely and thoroughly. The fugitive commandants took no military measures to stop it. On the second day of the raid, however, Inayat Khan decided on the dastardly plan of assassinating Shivaji. He sent a young man to the Maratha King under the pretext of negotiating a settlement. The very nature of the terms offered was conclusive evidence of the Governor's insincerity and of his perfidious intentions. Shivaji was naturally put out when the impossible stipulations were read out to him. He scornfully asked the Governor's envoy why his master had sought the safety of the fort like a woman and whether he expected the Maratha King to become guilty of similar cowardice by accepting his absurd offer. At this, the desperado rushed at Shivaji with a drawn dagger, aiming the lethal weapon at his breast. Providentially, and with great presence of mind, a Maratha guard who was in attendance, cut off the hand of the would-be assassin in time and later smashed his skull with another blow. But the man had rushed at Shivaji with such impetuosity that it was impossible to prevent his bleeding body from falling upon his intended victim. Besides being thrown out of his seat, Shivaji found his clothes soaked with the blood of the dying hireling.

Seeing blood on Shivaji's dress, all but those that were closest to him when the grim drama was being enacted believed that he had fallen a victim to the assassin's dagger. His followers became furious and decided on a general massacre, but they were promptly stopped by their master, with the assurance that he was not at all hurt. With a strange lack of consistency and by a complete disregard for his record as a man of great kindliness and generosity, Shivaji has been accused of having ordered the killing of four persons and the maiming of twenty-four others by chopping off their hands as an act of reprisal.

In the Surat episode, this is one more instance of a canard being presented as a sober fact. The story of Shivaji's alleged pitilessness has been picked up from the observations of an aggrieved foreigner, known for his dubious character. Anthony Smith, an English factor, fell into the hands of the Marathas and was detained in their camp for three days. This man, who was *persona non grata* with his own countrymen and the catalogue of whose misdemeanours was considered too long and too tedious to be recorded in full by his colleagues, was probably the sole contemporary who claimed to have witnessed Shivaji's alleged excesses at Surat.

There is, however, no decisive supporting evidence of the time to substantiate Smith's charge. Bernier, Manucci, Thevenot and Carre, to mention only a few names, were capable and observant chroniclers, but none of them has referred to the grim tragedy. Nor did the Dutch factors of Surat notice the butchery which, if it had ever taken place, would not have escaped their attention or comment. Indeed, like the unscrupulous Holwell, who contributed to the Indian history the "Black Hole tragedy" of Calcutta from his fertile but warped imagination, Smith is likely to have invented the myth about the cutting off of heads and hands at Surat, in resentment for his own imprisonment in the Maratha camp.

Apart from the tenability or otherwise of the allegation, it would be the height of absurdity to impugn the character or the greatness of a man solely on the basis of isolated happenings of extremely doubtful authenticity. Nor would it be fair or correct to ignore the fact that war is essentially wicked, however humane some of its practitioners may be. This has been so throughout history. There is thus manifest injustice in seeking to moralize on the so-called undesirable doings of Shivaji, real or imaginary, in Surat or elsewhere.

Shivaji's takings from Surat were large and are variously estimated at one crore to two crores of rupees. He employed the new resources to the best advantage. He strengthened the fortifications of Raigad, beautified it and otherwise made it worthy as the new capital of his realm. The fortress of Sindhudurg at Malwan was built with the same money for augmenting his naval strength. The Governor and his shivering retinue returned to the town after the withdrawal of the Marathas, to be greeted with derision by an angry populace which showered dirt on them as a proper reward for their cowardice and dereliction of duty. The valiant son of the Governor wreaked his revenge upon his tormentors by shooting "a poor innocent Hindu trader dead"!

Six years after the first raid, Shivaji returned to Surat and sacked it for the second time (October 3, 1670). The valour of the English, which was claimed to have saved the European factories during the raid of 1664, was conspicuous by its absence on this occasion. Foreseeing the coming danger, they took "a convenient time" to empty all their warehouses and sent down the goods to Swally for safety. The President, Gerald Aungier, and his Councillors shook the dust of Surat off their feet and sailed deep into the sea so that neither their lives nor their limbs would be in jeopardy! So great was the alarm felt by them at the coming of the Marathas that "they removed their treasure from the shore to one of their ships and the next day (October 4) loaded all their broadcloth, quicksilver, currall (coral?) etc. on board ship, 'to secure them against any attempts of Shivaji' ". The panic of the English was wholly unjustified, because, when their representatives waited upon Shivaji, he "received them in a very kind manner, telling them that the English and he were good friends, and putting his hand into their hands he told them that he would do the English no wrong".

The second raid on Surat yielded Shivaji valuables worth sixty-six lakhs of rupees. Before leaving for Maharahstra, he called upon the administrators of the city to pay him an annual tribute of twelve lakhs of rupees in order to secure immunity from further invasions. As soon as he turned his back on the city, it was taken over by a mob of destitute persons who thoroughly pillaged it. In this rewarding, if dishonest, pastime the English sailors took their full share under the leadership of Streynsham Master. If all that was claimed on behalf of the English as the stout-hearted defenders of Surat and its civic life and property could be true, the unhappy Governor might well have exclaimed over the behaviour of Master and his men: *Et tu Brute!*

Notwithstanding the Maratha incursions, Surat remained an important and prosperous city. It is true that it did not retain its pristine affluence as the greatest emporium of the East, but its decline was essentially due to a significant diversion of the country's trade to new commercial centres. The potential value of the little known island of Bombay as India's commercial and industrial capital was discerned by far-seeing Englishmen when it came into their possession. They spared no efforts in raising it to such pre-eminence. Unlike the Portuguese, they adopted a tolerant attitude towards the religion of the Indians and gave them ample facilities to settle down on the island and to start new commercial and industrial enterprises. The excellent natural harbour gave Bombay a well-deserved distinction as the gateway of India and the vast hinterland adjoining it was of inestimable value in developing an obscure and inhospitable island into the *urbs prima in Indis.*

It was, therefore, the growth of Bombay that halted the progress of Surat. But the fact that it continued to be a leading city long after the Maratha expeditions cannot be doubted. It was indeed impossible to deprive it of the great historical traditions with which its name was associated as the first permanent settlement of the English Company on the mainland of India. Besides, it remained the chief town of the Company down to 1687. Its importance had not greatly diminished even in 1799 when its administration was transferred to the direct jurisdiction of the Company Government. Surat at that time was known as "the greatest centre of maritime commerce in India, with all the signs of vast trading operations—great wealth, large population and exceptional jurisdictions".

The sacrifices made by Surat for Shivaji did not go in vain. Whatever might have been its trials and tribulations at the time they were made, they were undoubtedly fruitful in strengthening the cause of independence. A popular saying in Hindi, acclaiming Shivaji as an indomitable defender of the faith and the culture of the land, fully testifies to the value of such sacrifices.

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CHAPTER 8

THE HISTORIC EXPEDITIONS

(ii) SOUTH INDIA

In Shivaji's time South India presented the sordid spectacle of a house divided against itself. The greatness of this land of shrines and scholarship had suffered a severe setback following Muslim invasion from the north which began in the thirteenth century, culminating in the destruction of the ancient kingdoms of the Yadavas, the Hoysalas and the Pandyas. As pointed out in an earlier chapter, it was indeed a fitting retribution to the suicidal rulers of the Deccan and the south that the destruction of their greatness and glory was accomplished by a converted Hindu eunuch, Malik Kafur, who carried his victorious arms as far as Rameshvaram, destroying or desecrating some of the greatest temples on his march. Such acts of vandalism and spoliation continued unabated till the rise and expansion of the Vijayanagar Empire which, for more than two centuries, stood as an impregnable bastion against the onslaughts of bigotry and idol-smashing frenzy. "The great commentary," writes Professor K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, "on the Vedas composed by a syndicate of scholars with Sayana at their head, and the impressive additions made to the structure of almost all important temples in the country by the rulers of Vijayanagar, form the most typical monuments of the work of the great Hindu empire."

All the grim conditions of lawlessness and anarchy that had accompanied the Muslim conquest reasserted themselves soon after the dissolution of the great Empire. The efforts of the discomfited members of the royal family to repel the invaders and to re-establish stable conditions in the south were defeated by the treachery and the imbecility of their own subordinate chieftains. The attitude of the Hindus in other parts of the country was no less suicidal. They actively assisted the Deccan

Sultanates in overrunning the south and in despoiling it of its great riches. The valiant efforts of Sriranga Raya to stop Muslim expansion were rendered abortive, not only on account of the inadequacy of the means at his disposal, but also because of the disruptive activities of his own nobles and their intrigues with the enemy. The fallen condition of the Hindus in general is best illustrated by the fact that the rich temple of Narasimha at Ahobalam was plundered in 1579 by a chieftain from Maharashtra in the service of Golkonda, who rendered further disservice to his country and religion by ravaging the territories of his conquest.

Thus, South India became a happy hunting-ground for the Sultans of Bijapur and Golkonda, whose pomp and splendour were derived in no small measure from the riches taken from an industrious but disunited people. Watered by large and perennial rivers, the lands of the Tamilnad, miscalled Karnatak or Carnatic by certain early historians, were fertile and yielded abundant crops. Frugal, hard-working and enterprising, the inhabitants of the south produced abounding wealth which they liberally gave away to enrich their numerous temples. But none of these estimable qualities conduced to the promotion of their peace and happiness since they, like the rest of their countrymen, were totally destitute of the ability to defend their prosperity.

The southern peninsula had degenerated into a congeries of petty principalities, governed by ambitious *Poliagars* and *Naiks,* many of whom were the descendants of the feudatories of the dismembered Vijayanagar Empire. All of them shared the passion of seeking to destroy one another in the name of bringing the south under a single sovereignty. The beneficiaries of such intestinal quarrels were the Muslims, who, by taking and changing sides with the warring chiefs, eventually succeeded in planting their own hegemony in the region. As a Jesuit missionary wrote from Tiruchirapalli (Trichinopoly) in 1659: “The old kings of this country appear by their jealousies and imprudent action to invite the conquest of entire India by the Muslims.”

The Muslim Governors that held sway over the south under the overlordship of the kings of Bijapur and Golkonda were no less self-seeking and disunited. Their personal ambitions grew in proportion to the weakening of the central authority, which gave rise to chronic feuds amongst themselves. It was only the docility and the fatalistic resignation of the Hindu multitudes that had made the continuance of the Muslim rule possible. The vaulting ambitions of Sher Khan Lodi, the Afghan Governor of the Bijapur Government, who held charge of large regions in the south, with Valigandapuram as his capital, furnish a glaring example of how self-aggrandizement had become a notable feature of the political life of South India at the time of Shivaji's invasion. Taking the military assistance of the French at Pondicherry, he waged a relentless war against Nasir Muhammad, another Bijapur Governor, whose jurisdiction extended upto the French settlement, with Jinji as the seat of his government. The political goal of Sher Khan is best described in Sarkar's words: "Sher Khan was bent on annexing the territory of Jinji with the armed help of the French traders of Pondicherry. Nor was this the limit of his dream. He would, after thus removing his only rival in these parts and doubling his strength, hire more French soldiers, despoil the Hindu Nayaks beyond the Kaveri of their fabulous riches, and employ these resources in conquering the kingdom of Golkonda for himself!" The States of Bijapur and Golkonda had advanced far on their journey towards extinction and were, therefore, utterly incapable of reducing their recalcitrant subordinates in the south to submission and obedience.

The time was thus most propitious for the Hindu chiefs to unite and overthrow the feeble government of the Muslims in the south, but their own petty quarrels and ambitions prevented them from adopting any such patriotic course of action. However disunited amongst themselves, the Muslim rulers conitnued to play with impunity the role of a pike in a pond of small fish. The rivalries between the Naiks of Madura and Tanjore were bitter and irreconcilable. Vyankoji or Ekoji Bhosle, the step-brother of Shivaji, who had secured a firm foothold in the south by inheriting the *jagirs* of his father in

Mysore and elsewhere, took full advantage of the antagonism between the two Naiks and eventually succeeded in winning the *gadi* of Tanjore for himself in January 1676. Two months later, in March, he crowned himself and began to govern his territories in a state of semi-independent regality. Though of a vacillating disposition, Ekoji, as we shall see presently, was a competent man. Being a product of the times in which he lived, he was, however, not gifted with the vision or the patriotism of his illustrious brother.

The enforced idleness of Shivaji during the earlier months of 1676, occasioned by his prolonged illness, gave him ample time to reflect on the state of the country. In the brief period since he had set out on his career of conquest and liberation, his achievements had undoubtedly been both massive and towering. But much still remained to be done if justice and righteousness were to be established over the length and breadth of the land. He had passed the peak of his youthful vigour and how long he would be spared to guide the noble cause, none could predict. It was, therefore, the path of prudence to consolidate the present gains and to prepare the ground for further expansion. There should be a second line of defence in the event of the Government of Maharashtra falling into feeble hands after him. The peace with the Moghuls and Bijapur was a mere make-believe and, from the point of view of the imperialists, it was dictated entirely by considerations of political and military prudence.

Shivaji's gaze was thus turned towards the south, the instability and the vast resources of which offered him opportunities for a relatively easy and profitable conquest. Some of the southern strongholds, such as Jinji and Vellore, were perhaps comparable with Sinhgad and Purandar in their natural strength and their possession by the Marathas would indubitably advance the national cause, especially in periods of difficulty and danger. In addition, the teeming wealth of the south could best be converted into sinews of war of which the Marathas were in dire need. Shivaji's military and political prescience as well as the need for him to acquire more resources thus decided him to embark on his historic expedition to the south. Ekoji's reluctance to share his patrimony with his brother gave him one more reason for launching the invasion.

Shivaji's project received the enthusiastic support of two eminent Brahmins, Raghunathpant Hanumante, a trusted and accomplished servant of Maharashtra, and Madanna or Madanpant, the Prime Minister of the Shah of Golkonda. Like Dadaji Kond Dev, the father of Raghunathpant, Naro Trimal Hanumante, was a distinguished and loyal comrade of Shahaji whom he had accompanied to the south. After his death, his two sons were detailed for service under the Bhosles, Janardanpant electing to assist Shivaji. Raghunathpant was left in the south to act as guide, philosopher and friend to Ekoji. The Pant was an accomplished scholar, besides being endowed with a brilliant mind. He was gifted with a wide-ranging vision and, with the clarity of a statesman, saw how immense was the scope for the reassertion of Hindu dominion in the south.

It is possible that a man of Raghunathpant's patriotic fervour could not easily reconcile himself to Ekoji's inflexible adherence to the Bijapur Government. Perhaps, the large measure of autonomy which Ekoji enjoyed made the yoke of Muslim paramountcy bearable to him, but his mettlesome minister desired an entirely different political disposition. In any case, the master and the servant could not see eye to eye on many vital issues and they prudently parted company. The precise reasons for the rupture in their relations have not been recorded, but there is no doubt that a certain incompatibility of temperament prevented the two from coming together closer.

Shivaji, however, held the Pant in the highest esteem for his commanding abilities as a diplomat. In fact, as Sardesai rightly remarks, full credit should be given to the talented Hanumante family for the achievements of Shahaji and Ekoji in the south. In a heart-warming letter, written at a later date to Raghunathpant, Shivaji declared: "I have endeavoured to train a body of men as my co-workers in the national cause, but your position is unique. You have served my father and, like him, have acquired the right to guide me whenever I cannot see my way. Indeed, I esteem you as highly as I respected my father. Your services to the noble cause entitle you to that exalted status."

Raghunathpant first proceeded from Tanjore to Bijapur in order to make a close personal study of both its strength and weakness. He saw that the Adilshahi dynasty was on its last legs, its doom being hastened by the civil war that was currently raging between the Afghan and the Deccani Muslims. He then went to Bhagnagar or Hyderabad to confer with Madanpant, the Prime Minister of Golkonda State, on the plan for the revival of Hindu supremacy in the south. Madanpant was a shrewd and competent man who was deeply devoted to his religion, but his ardent adhesion to his own faith did not breed any intolerance in him. In fact, he desired that the followers of all religions in the country should have untrammelled freedom to worship God according to their own lights. Such a goal, he was convinced, could be realized only by recovering the sovereignty the Hindus had lost.

Madanpant's views coincided completely with those of both Shivaji and Raghunathpant. The latter had little difficulty in convincing the Minister that the king of Maharashtra alone could accomplish this supreme task. Their plan of action was simple; Shivaji should be invited to undertake a military expedition to the south and establish a firm government there after eliminating the warring rulers and their petty, intervening principalities. The resources of Golkonda and the co-operation of its ruler should be secured towards this end. Nothing would be lost by conceding the nominal sovereignty of the Shah over such recovered territories as had originally belonged to his state, so long as the substance of power lay in the hands of Shivaji and his officers. In the following century similar plans were discussed by some of the forward-looking Indians with the object of enabling the Marathas to assume the responsibilities of continental sovereignty, but they came to nothing.

The plan of the two Brahmin statesmen did not, however, prove abortive. Madanpant, who had rendered signal service to the State in a period of grave crisis, enjoyed the boundless confidence of his sovereign, Abul Hasan Qutb Shah, who invariably accepted and acted on the advice of his minister without doubt or demur. There was no love lost between him and the imperialists who were merely biding their time to annex his realm. It was necessary to prevent such a catastrophe by making common cause with the Marathas whose military power, as he could see, was fast waxing to formidable proportions. Besides, which autocrat does not desire the extension of his dominion, especially when such gains can be made with the expenditure of somebody else's blood? Golkonda's participation in Shivaji's scheme for organizing an expedition to the south thus fulfilled both the interests and the foibles of its ruler. Abul Hasan readily agreed to write to Shivaji personally, inviting him to the capital to discuss the terms and details of the expedition.

Shivaji readily responded to the invitation which suited his plans admirably. He had spent many months in preparing for the southern march. To secure his rear, he sent a strong military force against Kopbaldurg, which was under the command of two Afghan captains in the pay of the Bijapur Government. The Khans, whose oppressive regime had caused deep discontent among the local population, were soundly beaten by the Marathas in a fiercely-contested engagement. One of the brothers was killed in action, while another was taken prisoner. The victorious Marathas, who were led by Hambirrao Mohite and Dhanaji Jadhav, joined Shivaji's main army at Hyderabad after gaining possession of the fort and the surrounding district.

Shivaji started on his historic journey from Raigad, his capital, towards the end of January 1677. He marched to Hyderabad with 30,000 cavalry and 40,000 infantry. With his customary foresight, he made careful arrangements for the government of his realm during his absence which he anticipated would be long, as indeed it proved to be. At this time Aurangzeb was too deeply involved in his operations against the turbulent hillmen of the North-West Frontier to be able to give much attention to the happenings in the distant Deccan. Bahadur Khan, his deputy, had by now become heartily sick of his futile campaigns against the Marathas so that any pretext was good enough for him to remain inactive. Flattery and gold played an effective part in ensuring his inaction during Shivaji's absence from Maharashtra. No danger was apprehended from Bijapur which was itself in imminent peril of dissolution. The remaining Muslim power in the Deccan, Golkonda, had agreed to become an active partner in Shivaji's southern expedition, being anxious to secure his friendship as an insurance against the aggressions of the imperialists and to take its share in the fruits of his victories. Moro Trimbak Pingle, the great Peshwa, and Annaji Datto were left behind to guard and administer the state during his absence.

The large Maratha army was disciplined and its behaviour during its march to Hyderabad was exemplary. A great welcome awaited the renowned leader and his men in the capital of the Kutubshahi Kingdom. Shivaji, who had a natural revulsion for gaudy and glittering displays, for once ignored his predilection for simplicity and clothed and equipped his men in a splendid array. Hyderabad, which the Marathas reached in February 1677, wore a festive appearance. Houses and streets had been cleaned up and decorated to accord a fitting reception to "the great friend and protector" of the Shah. Hundreds of thousands of men, women and children, clad in their best, thronged the streets and the roofs and balconies of their houses to gain a vivid glimpse of the celebrated hero and his devoted followers. The Shah offered to receive his guest outside the city, but Shivaji assured him that the proprieties of hospitality would be amply fulfilled if he could be welcomed in the king's palace itself.

The manly bearing of the seventy thousand Maratha troops and their orderliness and discipline made a profound impression on the minds of the citizens of Hyderabad. They beheld for the first time the famous soldiers and statesmen and their renowned leader who, by their prowess and diplomacy, had given shape and substance to the long-cherished desire of millions of their countrymen for the revival of the traditions of tolerance and justice in the land. The heroes of many wars, such as the celebrated Hambirrao Mohite, Anandrao and Manaji More, Suryaji Malusare and Yesaji Kank, were there, figuring prominently among the marching troops.

No less conspicuous were the Brahmin advisers and ambassadors of Shivaji, with their painted foreheads and bright-coloured headgears, some of whom were as skilled in wielding the sword as in using their rapier-keen intellect in the service of their master. The erudite Raghunathpant and his brother Janardan Hanumante, the brilliant Prahlad Niraji, the resident ambassador of Shivaji at Hyderabad, the chronicler Dattaji Trimbak, and many other high Brahmin dignitaries of state, including Nilo Moreshwar and Gangadharpant, were present on that memorable occasion.

Also marching with the army was the cultivated flower of Maharashtra's intelligence, Nila Prabhu, who has won an honoured place in the kingdom of letters by his superb penmanship, as exemplified by Shivaji's famous epistle to Aurangzeb protesting against the Emperor's morbid bigotry and malevolence. Balaji Avji, the inimitable secretary of Shivaji and his master's conscience-keeper, together with Shamji Naik, the Keeper of the Seal, completed the concourse of distinguished men that accompanied Shivaji on that day.

In that mighty throng of armed men Shivaji was, of course, the central figure and the cynosure of all eyes. Short, lean and graceful, he had justly become famous for the gifts of his personal magnetism. A pleasing radiance suffused his personality so that none that beheld him could resist the overwhelming impression that they were in the presence of a really great man. By now Shivaji's fame had travelled far and wide and his matchless deeds of valour, piety and statesmanship filled his countrymen with deep admiration and affection for him. It was for this reason that the reception accorded to him by the citizens of Hyderabad on that day in February 1677 was so spontaneous and memorable. Thousands of voices were raised in chorus to greet the distinguished guest, while groups of ladies, young and old, stopped the procession from time to time to ply lighted lamps before Shivaji—a pleasing ceremony regarded as most auspicious by the Hindus. The Maratha King smilingly acknowledged such manifestations of affection and regard for him and liberally distributed gold and silver among the crowds around him.

King Abul Hasan received Shivaji in his palace with the courtesy and cordiality due to a distinguished and invited guest. The two monarchs held long discussions on matters of mutual interest and came to understand each other intimately. Shivaji's frankness and modesty as well as his towering abilities deeply impressed the Shah whose own uneventful existence presented a marked contrast to the brilliant achievements of his guest. Madanpant, the Minister, played a leading part in promoting greater amity between them and in settling the terms of their alliance.

Shivaji's military expedition to the south figured prominently in the compact which laid down that the Government of Golkonda should pay the Marathas a sum of Rs. 4½ lakhs a month towards the cost of the invasion, besides detailing five thousand troops to accompany the Maratha army. It was further stipulated that Golkonda should supply a train of artillery to the invading force. In return Shivaji promised to make over to his ally such of the southern territories to be conquered by him as did not originally belong to his father, Shahaji. The treaty reiterated the need for strengthening the defensive alliance between the two governments as a safeguard against the expansionist designs of the Moghuls and laid down that the Sultan should ensure a regular payment of one lakh *hons* annually as tribute to Shivaji. He should also entertain at his court a permanent ambassador from the Maratha Government.

Shivaji's stay in his ally's capital for several weeks was both pleasant and profitable to him. He fulfilled his social obligations with grace and cheerfulness, attending receptions and dinners given in his honour. With closer acquaintance, the Shah's admiration for him grew and this was reflected in a liberal presentation of costly gifts to the guest. Shivaji left Hyderabad early in March 1677, carrying with him the goodwill and the best wishes of the people and the ruler of the state.

He proceeded to Karnool, a large town in Andhra, and collected five lakh *hons* from it. After bathing in the confluence of the Krishna and the Bhavanashi near Karnool, he went to the famous Shrishailam shrine, forty-four miles east of the same town.

Situated on a spot of striking beauty and seclusion, the temple exercises an irresistible fascination on the minds of the devout. A deeply religious man, Shivaji was overwhelmed by the sanctity of the place and the time-honoured solemnities of the shrine. He experienced a great serenity of mind and developed a marked distaste for returning to the sordid world of strife and hatred. He spent ten days in the temple in such spiritual ecstasy that it required all the eloquence and pressure of his followers to persuade him to rejoin his army which was then in camp at Anantapur, also in Andhra.

Shivaji's aim was to take into possession most of the important strongholds in the south so that in times of stress and difficulty, the Government of Maharashtra could move into them. Jinji, Gingee or Chenjee, in South Arcot, was one such powerful fort. An old Gazetteer describes the place thus: "There are three lofty rocky hills in the form of a triangle enclosed by a strong wall flanked with towers and the circuit of which is three miles; besides this there were fortified enclosures, double round the eastern, and treble round the westernmost hill (the highest), on the summit of which was a small fort, now in ruins, which could be held by a very few men against any force. There is always water to be found in a natural hollow of the rock...... It was considered the strongest fortress in the Carnatic."

Shivaji detached a strong contingent of five thousand horse from his main army for the capture of Jinji which, as stated earlier, was then under the command of Nasir Muhammad Khan, a general of the Bijapur Government. The Khan was a wise Galileo. Apart from the superior military strength of the Marathas, he knew that he could secure little assistance from the disintegrating administration of Bijapur. Moreover, the relentless aggression of Sher Khan Lodi was a constant menace to his possessions. He, therefore, decided to surrender the fort of Jinji to the Marathas peacefully in return for a liberal cash payment, besides a *jagir* fetching an annual revenue of Rs. 50,000.

It was a welcome windfall for Shivaji who hastened to the fort to inspect its fortifications and to make arrangements for its defence. He pulled down the old fortifications and built new and stronger ones in their place. The strategic importance of the stronghold decided him to develop Jinji into the principal seat of his government in the south. Towards this end he built new offices and residential quarters for his civil and military subordinates. Rayaji Nalge was assigned the important task of commanding the fort, while Vithal Pildev Atre was appointed to administer the revenue affairs of the district.

Shivaji's prescience in building a second Maratha capital deep in the south was of inestimable value to the national cause after his death. The capture and murder of his eldest son, Sambhaji, by Aurangzeb in March 1689 and the defeat of the Maratha forces in all theatres of war, in contrast to their resounding successes against their enemies during his lifetime, threatened to annihilate his hard-won realm. But the fugitive Rajaram, his second son, saved it from falling into tearful ruins by seeking the asylum of Jinji, from where he held aloft the standard of independence and eventually succeeded in defeating and destroying the military might of the imperialists.

The acquisition of Jinji by the Marathas set the stage for the conquest of Vellore, another strong fortress, situated eighty-four miles from Madras. It was held by an Abyssinian officer called Abdulla Khan who refused to surrender it for any consideration. It was a powerfully-built fortress and was indeed among the strongest in the south. The fort is situated three-quarters of a mile from the foot of a high range of bare, rough and rocky hills and is equipped with high and broad ramparts over which two carts can be driven abreast. It abounds in bastions and towers and is separated by a broad and deep moat which, in the time of Shivaji and in later centuries, was infested with alligators of a monstrous size.

Shivaji was not adequately equipped to capture such an impregnable stronghold within a short period and was certainly not prepared to waste time by sitting indefinitely before it. He detailed Narhari Rudra to continue the siege and, taking a sizable army with himself, proceeded against Sher Khan Lodi, the only Muslim governor of note that had elected to dispute openly his career of conquest in the south. Vellore held on for many months longer and did not surrender to the Marathas till the third week of August 1678 by which time Shivaji had returned to Maharashtra.

Sher Khan's enthusiasm for trying conclusions with Shivaji outstripped his prudence. He encamped at Tiruvadi, thirteen miles west of Cuddalore on June 10, 1677, determined to give battle to the Marathas when they arrived. Sixteen days later, Shivaji appeared in the neighbourhood with six thousand cavalry. The rest of the story may well be narrated from the contemporary chronicle of Francis Martin, the Governor of the French Settlement of Pondicherry: "Chircam (Sher Khan) at once caused his men to be put into fighting order and advanced against his enemies; it is not known whether he still had the foolishness with which the Bramens (Brahmins) had inspired him, to believe that his enemies would disappear when he approached them, but it is certain that his march had something of a martial character. This intrepidity did not, however, last long. Sivagy's (Shivaji's) army did not swerve in the least; it awaited the shock. Chircam recognized thereby that he had taken a false step; the posture of his enemies astounded him; he decided to make a retreat. Sivagy, who understood the science of war, perceived his (Chircam's) surprise; he made his troops march; the retreat was precipitate and was converted into a kind of flight; the enemies pushed on and then all were scattered. Chircam fled with his son and with some of his principal officers at full speed."

Such was the prowess of the man who had conceived the grand project of sitting on the throne of Golkonda! The victorious Marathas pushed forward making new conquests and eventually forced the rash Pathan to sue for peace. He visited

Shivaji on July 5, 1677 and agreed to cede the entire territory that had been held by him. He also paid a large ransom and bound himself to contribute more. To prove his *bona fides,* he left his son behind with the Marathas as a hostage and ended his misadventure by eventually retiring to the court of the Naik of Madura. For his part, the Naik secured immunity from the invasion of his territory by the Marathas by agreeing to pay them six lakh *hons.* The way was now clear for Shivaji to attempt a negotiated settlement of his dispute with his step-brother, Ekoji.

Shivaji and Ekoji had been cast in two different moulds. They had the same father, but their mothers were different. It is a fact of supreme importance that Shivaji was twice blessed in his mother, Jijabai, like whom it was impossible to find another woman. She was, as we saw, a lady gifted with a wide-ranging vision and patriotism, both of which insured against her son sinking into ignoble obscurity by pursuing the familiar career open to persons of his class in those times. She had made heavy sacrifices and run grave risks for the single purpose of training Shivaji for his exalted mission. Indeed, on many critical occasions, like the one that led to his encounter with Afzal Khan, she played a decisive part in influencing his manly decisions. What with his natural greatness, Shivaji had thus the additional advantage of a careful and disciplined upbringing during the formative years of his life.

It was not Ekoji's fault that his career and outlook were not similarly moulded. He was perhaps taught to believe that the *status quo,* with all its iniquities and injustices, was the best since it was not within his means to change it. Like that of many other Maratha *sardars* of his time, the service of the Sultans and a successful personal career under their patronage became the *summum bonum* of his life. Ekoji was brave and capable and employed these assets in the service of his masters with an obsessional thoroughness. He was, therefore, unable to appreciate the true significance or the grandeur of his brother's undertaking and gave repeated proofs of such insensibility by ranging himself on the side of Bijapur in its campaigns against Shivaji.

The estrangement between the brothers was thus fundamental. It would have been futile for Shivaji to rely merely on appeals to reason and sentiment in order to convert Ekoji to his own point of view. The cause of independence in the Deccan and the south would have acquired greater strength if only the younger man could unite his resources and talents with those of the great deliverer, but since no such lofty sentiment animated him, the only other practical course by which the goal could be realized was for Shivaji to demand his share of the patrimony. Ekoji had long enjoyed the revenues of his father's extensive *jagirs* in Mysore State and elsewhere in the south without sharing them with his elder brother.

This preview of the relations between the two brothers is essential in order to understand the subsequent story of Ekoji's intransigence and his failure to appreciate Shivaji's stand. After much persuasion Ekoji agreed to call on his brother and the two men met in the middle of July 1677 at Tirumalavadi, near Tanjore. They spent some days in entertaining each other and later addressed themselves to the task of regulating their mutual relations. From first to last, the attitude of Ekoji was unhelpful. This fact has been recorded by Francois Martin who writes: "The first conversation gave evidence of amity and tenderness; then it came to negotiation when Ecugy (Ekoji) discovered that his brother would not let him go unless he had satisfied him about his claims. He (Ekoji). also used his cunning and while he offered friendly words he sought some means of withdrawing himself from such a bad strait; he succeeded therein one night; he had a *cattamaron* (catamaran) kept ready for him on the banks of the Couleron; under pretext of necessity, for he was watched, he approached the banks of the river, threw himself into the *cattamaron* and crossed to the other side which was his country and where he had some troops."

Shivaji was naturally furious over his brother's precipitate departure from his camp, since it gave an entirely false impression that he had kept Ekoji in duress with the object of extorting unreasonable concessions from him. There was in fact no need for him to adopt any such measure, since he was strong enough to annex any of his brother's territories or the whole of them. Ekoji's misbehaviour called for a certain sternness on the part of Shivaji who ordered the detention of the trusted counsellors of his brother in his camp. Since this step failed to teach the younger man the error of his ways, Shivaji sent them back to him, with appropriate gifts.

The Maratha King was deeply offended by the obstinate refusal of Ekoji to give up his service under the Bijapur Government. His personal negotiations having proved infructuous, he wrote a spirited letter on March 1, 1678, appealing to his brother to listen to his counsels of wisdom. He pointed out to Ekoji how wrong it was on his part to insist on serving the Turks and the Pathans when Providence had ordained that he, Shivaji, should reconquer the heritage of the land from them. He appealed to him to abandon the suicidal course of widening domestic dissensions and promised to give him a *jagir* in the region between the river Tungabhadra and the fort of Panhala, yielding a revenue of three lakhs annually.

It is to the lasting credit of Dipabai, Ekoji's sagacious wife, that the rupture in the relations between the two brothers was eventually healed, although the younger man could never bear true affection for his senior. She succeeded in weaning her husband from the influence of his evil-minded advisers and persuaded him to recall Raghunathpant and allow himself to be guided by that eminent and scholarly Brahmin. Shivaji was happy at the welcome change in his brother's attitude and wrote a cordial letter to Raghunathpant eulogizing the wisdom and the patriotism of his sister-in-law. In appreciation of her good offices he specifically laid down in the agreement that was concluded with his brother that the revenues from the districts of Bangalore, Hoskote and Shiralkot in Mysore State should be settled on her. "After Dipabai," the provision read, "they will continue to her daughter or to any one else named by her."

The terms of the agreement make it abundantly clear that

Shivaji's dispute with his brother was not so much over the division of the property as over the obstinate and unpatriotic adhesion of Ekoji to the Bijapur Government. Article sixteen of the compact proves this beyond a shadow of doubt because it says: "We have conquered Tanjore and the adjoining districts of Ekoji worth about seven lakh *hons*. We hand them back to him as his own separate possession." Some of the other provisions deal with vital political issues, differences over which had played no small part in intensifying the estrangement between the two brothers. Article six bound Ekoji to ensure that no man was entertained in his state if he proved to be the enemy of the Hindu religion. Article twelve recalled Shivaji's treaty of 1662 with Bijapur, which forbade both him and his brother from accepting service in that state. It was agreed that this stipulation should now be scrupulously honoured by Ekoji.

Ekoji's acceptance of the new settlement was, however, neither cordial nor wholehearted. He drifted into suicidal despondency, turning his back on the responsibilities of his office. Shivaji's repeated exhortations to him to return to active life and zealously fulfil his obligations to his realm and the country fell on deaf ears. His last appeal was written in January 1680 and before he could know of its effect on his brother, his own earthly career came to an end.

Shivaji could not stay in the south indefinitely. His return journey began in the last week of July, following his abortive talks with Ekoji. On his way back. he worshipped at some of the famous shrines, while his armies made new conquests, including the capture of the district of Arni, Kolar, Hoskote, Bangalore and some other places in Mysore State. He marched across the districts of Bellary and Dharwar, both now within the administrative jurisdiction of the same State, and reached Panhala early in April 1678.

Shivaji's conquests in the south in terms of territory and revenue have been variously estimated. According to Sabhasad, quoted by Sarkar, the new territorial gains of Shivaji in the south yielded him an annual revenue of twenty lakh *hons.* The conquered region contained as many as 100 forts, either captured or built by him. A European wrote from Madras in August 1678 thus: "Shivaji by his deputies has a full and quiet possession of all these countries about those two strong castles of Jinji and Vellore, which are worth 22 lakhs of pardoes or 550 thousand pounds sterling per annum, at five shillings the pardoe, in which he has a considerable force of men and horse, 72 strong hills and 14 forts (in the plain), being 60 leagues long and 40 broad."

The volume of wealth taken away by him to equip and enlarge his armies was considerable. A large number of men were imported from Maharashtra to administer the new charge. The region, comprising the Karnatak plains, was placed under the viceroyalty of Santaji Bhosle, with Jinji as his headquarters. He was assisted in his new responsibilities by Raghunathpant Hanumante who possessed unrivalled knowledge of the south. Hambirrao Mohite, the *Senapati,* was entrusted with the task of defending the new acquisitions. Rango Narayan was appointed to govern the Mysore tableland under the general supervision of the Viceroy of Jinji.

Many graphic accounts have been left behind about Shivaji's historic expedition to South India. Abounding in ancient and splendid shrines, it gave him ample opportunities to give free rein to his devotional fervour. The wealth collected from the south was considerable and it certainly stood the Maratha State in good stead both then and in later years when its stability was, sorely tried by Moghul aggressions. It was Shivaji's distinctive trait to cultivate and to win the esteem and confidence of the people visited by him rather than incur their rancour and antagonism. Abbe Carre rightly remarks: "To the quickness of movement, he added, like Julius Caesar, a clemency and bounty that won him the hearts of those his arms had worsted." His simplicity was equally remarkable, thus offering one more proof that his expeditions for raising money were intended essentially to advance the common cause and not to promote his own interests or to gratify his vanity. A Western observer wrote from the south thus: "The camp of Shivaji was without pomp and without women; there was no baggage and there were only two tents made of cloth, coarse and very scanty, one for himself and another for his prime minister."

It is an unfortunate accident of history that Shivaji did not live long enough to be able to make enduring administrative and military dispositions in his new dominion. The regime set up by him required long years of effective control and guidance by a central authority enjoying commanding influence and prestige. Such unique direction could be supplied only by Shivaji, but he lived for only two more years after his southern invasion. What course history would have taken if he had been spared a decade longer, certainly presents an interesting theme for speculation, but guesses, however rewarding to one's powers of imagination, are singularly futile.

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CHAPTER 9

EUROPEANS IN INDIA

SHIVAJI's dealings with the European traders in India were marked by caution and kindliness and at the same time by a determination not to allow them to encroach upon his rights. It was impossible for him or for any of his contemporaries to foresee that one of the nations of these trading communities was destined to impose its sway eventually over the length and breadth of the country. In his time, the Portuguese, the Dutch, the English and the French were all content to pursue their commercial interests undistracted by territorial ambitions. They fought amongst themselves bitterly to seize the monopoly of the abounding trade and, being largely preoccupied with considerations of profits and dividends, their activities, mostly confined to their coastal settlements, aroused neither jealousy nor fear. The days of Warren Hastings, the first outstanding British statesman in India, and of men like him whose nobility and vision elevated them far above the passions, the greed and the cruelties of the time, were still far off.

Nevertheless, Shivaji, with his natural inquisitiveness and his desire to gain a wider understanding of the world around him, missed no opportunity to study the calibre and the outlook of the fair-skinned foreigners. He admired their spirit of adventure, took note of the advance made by their nations in the weapons and modes of warfare, and appreciated the tenacity of purpose that generally governed their activities. His long and animated conversation with Manucci, the Italian artillery officer in Raja Jai Singh's army, in 1665, on a wide variety of subjects, testifies to a mind that was at once alert and awake.

The coming of the Europeans to India was an event of great international significance. It not only broke the isolation of the East, but also paved the way for a closer integration of the world. Much of the credit for this historic achievement belongs to Portugal whose atrocious behaviour and misdeeds during the period of her decline and in our own time do not provide a true measure of her contribution in the past to the promotion of a better understanding of the vastness, the variety and the splendour of the world. The Portuguese sailors were men of great intrepidity, who roamed the high seas in their swift caravels, braving the perils of the uncharted oceans. The fifteenth century, in particular, was a period of unceasing activity for Portugal whose discovery of the sea route to India, gave her access to the fabulous wealth of the East in addition to the unexploited riches of Brazil in the new world. In fact, Portugal held the so-called "gorgeous East" in fee for a century, claiming proprietary rights over that vast region.

But this small country, with its severely limited man-power resources and its unbridled religious bigotry, could not long retain its far-flung empire. The Dutch waged a relentless war against the Portuguese and, with the aid of their superior organization and seamanship, dislodged them from most of their possessions in the East. The Dutch had, however, no heart in India. The Archipelago was the pride of their possessions and was in fact their main economic, strategic and administrative centre in the East. The stage was thus set for the English to secure a firm foothold in this country, although singly they were no match either for the Portuguese or the Dutch. The French, whose chances of founding an empire in India were as good as those of their traditional rivals, missed the great opportunity on account of the imbecility of their Government. By such a fortunate process of elimination the English eventually succeeded in establishing their hegemony in this country, although nothing was more remote from their thoughts than the idea of empire in the days of Shivaji.

Shivaji's normally good relations with the English were exacerbated by three episodes which will be explained presently. He was one of the few Indians who realized the value of naval power to defend the integrity of the country and to promote its material prosperity. The Moghuls were singularly deficient in such a statesmanlike vision. They owned no gunboats to protect the long coastline, but specialized in erecting gibbets and guillotines instead to destroy their opponents inside the country! For such folly they paid heavily by forfeiting their sovereignty over the Indian waters and depending helplessly on the forbearance of the European trading companies in India for the unmolested movement of their vessels. Even the great Akbar tacitly acknowledged Portuguese paramountcy over the Indian coast by "taking out licenses for ships sent by him to the Red Sea, and the Moghuls made no attempt either to free or to command the waters". Even after the decline of their power the Portuguese refused to give up their pretensions to be recognized as masters of the Indian seas.

Such an arrogation of sovereign rights by a distant country over the home waters of India was an intolerable affront to her dignity and pride. Shivaji was determined not to permit it. He had neither the resources nor the time for building up a mighty armada and employing it against the foreign intruders in order to win pre-eminence for India as a naval power. But to secure the freedom of the seas along the country's western coast-line was well within his scope and he strove towards this goal with all his might and resources till the end of his life. It was evident to him that neither the security of his realm nor its progress and prosperity could be ensured unless he built up a navy of his own.

The west coast, dotted with a number of large and wealthy towns, was extremely prosperous and transacted an enormous volume of import and export business. The island of Bombay was still a little-known and unhealthy place, although the wise policy of the English and the excellence of the harbour had begun to attract to it *entrepreneurs* and others in steadily increasing numbers, thus guaranteeing its eventual growth as the foremost commercial centre of India. The imprudence and the bigotry of the Portuguese virtually barred the progress of Goa as an important commercial and industrial city and whatever pre-eminence it had acquired in the past centuries disappeared with the fall of the Vijayanagar Empire.

Port towns like Dabhol, Rajapur, Karwar, Bhatkal and Vengurla, lying between Bombay and Cochin, acquired considerable importance and affluence by exporting a wide variety of goods of which spices and textiles were most conspicuous. The pepper of Sonda was highly-prized and its excellence was described in rapturous terms by calling it "the best and the dearest in the world". The local Raja's "pepper-country" yielded an enormous revenue, his annual collections being estimated at thirty lakh *pagodas*.

Karwar became a leading exporting centre for the celebrated muslin and other fabrics, and the English factory in the town alone transacted a prodigious volume of business in this commodity by engaging inland an army of weavers to maintain a steady flow of exports. "The chief merit of Karwar," says the authority just quoted, "is its spacious harbour, the only first-rate harbour on the west coast between Bombay and Colombo. It offers every convenience for shipping at all times of the year."

The capture of Kalyan and Bhiwandi by Shivaji in 1657 gave him a firm foothold in the Konkan. Thenceforward, he started ship-building in the well-sheltered creeks in the region and increased the tempo of his naval activities as he acquired greater control over the coastline. His ships were as good as any that could be built in India in those times and certainly compared well with those of Portugal. His crew consisted of men with long seafearing traditions, inhabiting the coastal districts, and his choice—a fact of supreme importance—was inhibited by no considerations of caste or religion. The Muslims of the Konkan, known for their courage and skill on the seas, formed a considerable element in Shivaji's navy, one of his Commanders-in-Chief being an adherent of Islam.

Shivaji also built a chain of strongholds on a wide stretch of the west coast to serve as convenient bases for his navy. The construction of the first fort of this kind, Vijayadurg, described as the "most perfect example of a great coastal fortress", was begun in 1653, some four years before he had gained possession of the Konkan town of Kalyan. The second large fort was Suvarndurg which was completed in 1660. Sindhudurg off Malvan was the most formidable of Shivaji's strongholds on the sea coast, on which he spent enormous labour and sums of money, a part of which was derived from the wealth secured from Surat. So great was the importance attached to this fortress that Shivaji is stated to have laboured with his own hands to strengthen its defences. The work of fortification was begun with solemn rites on November 25, 1664. The last important naval post to be constructed during his reign was Kolaba which was completed on the eve of his death in 1680.

Shivaji's policy in the Konkan was clear and well-defined. He was determined to secure his unchallenged supremacy over it by defeating and expelling the agents of Bijapur and of the Moghuls from the region. He desired that the coastal trade should prosper and entertained no thought of excluding any of the European traders from participating in it so long as they did not seek to thrust their oars into the country's troubled political waters. He resolutely fought piracy on the seas and lawlessness on the coast and played no small part in establishing stable conditions in the districts. The Gazetteer of Kolaba and Janjira says: "Besides, by enriching it with the spoils of Gujarat, the Deccan and the Karnatak, Shivaji did much to improve the Konkan by giving highly paid employment in his army and in building and guarding his hill forts. He also introduced a more uniform and lighter land tax, suppressed irregular exactions, and fostered trade."

It is in this context of the Maratha King's determination to extend his sway over the Konkan and to enhance its resources that we should understand his strained relations with the English. It will be recalled that after the destruction of his foe, Afzal Khan, in November 1659, Shivaji won a resounding victory over the Bijapur army and captured the strong fortress of Panhala in the last week of the same month. Before the enemy could recover from the blow he suddenly appeared in Ratnagiri district in the Konkan and conquered a number of important inland towns and ports. Dabhol fell and Rajapur would have followed suit, but Shivaji stayed his hand in order to oblige the Bijapur Governor, Rustam-i-Zaman, who was favourably disposed towards him.

An unfair advantage was taken of this leniency by the defeated Governor of Dabhol, Muhammad Sharif, who, responding to the importunities of Afzal Khan's son, despatched the latter's three loaded junks to Rajapur for safe custody. The Marathas, who were at war with Bijapur, demanded the surrender of the three vessels which had been taken over by the English factors at the port. The chief factor, who falsely claimed that the junks belonged to his Company, fled from Rajapur and sought asylum of the sea when he discovered that his deceitful conduct would be severely punished by the Marathas. The cargo was seized and in order to teach the factors a lesson that strategems and subterfuges and interference in other people's affairs, especially when practised against a friendly power, deserved punishment, the second officer in charge of the English factory, called Gifford, was arrested and held in duress for some time. He was, however, released later.

Evidently, such a mild retribution made no salutary impression on the English. In 1660 they once again flagrantly violated the principles of neutrality by co-operating with the Bijapur *Darbar* in its attempts to reduce the fort of Panhala. In May of that year the fort, in which Shivaji had taken refuge, was closely invested by Siddi Jauhar and the Maratha chief would in all probability have fallen a prisoner into the hands of the enemy, had he not risen to the occasion and made his escape from the stronghold. It was on this occasion, when he was exposed to grave danger, that the English factors from Rajapur not only supplied arms and ammunition to the Bijapur Government, but actually participated in the campaign by opening destructive fire on the fort and by hurling grenades at the beleaguered garrison. These acts of aggression were committed openly, with the English Company's flag flying during the operations.

Shivaji considered it misplaced generosity if he condoned or treated lightly the second deliberate act of unfriendliness on the part of the foreigners. The reprisals in the circumstances could only be severe. On March 3, 1661 he suddenly appeared before Rajapur, causing mortal terror to the guilty factors. He thoroughly pillaged their warehouses and in addition took a few Englishmen into custody and sent them to a distant part of his realm for detention. They prayed and petitioned and fell upon their knees before him to be set free, but he was adamant. He, however, promised to release them if they paid a large indemnity—an appropriate punishment to the coin-spinning fraternity! The captives hummed and hawed and wrote copiously to their principals at Surat pleading, sometimes angrily but often piteously, for their good offices in securing their early deliverance. Unfortunately for them, the reply from Surat (March 10, 1662) was devastating. "How you came in prison," wrote the President with remorseless finality, "you know very well. It was not for defending the Company's goods; it was for going to the siege of Panhala and tossing balls with a flag that was known to be the English's. None but what is rehearsed is the cause of your imprisonment." Shivaji, however, relented and set them free in due course on his own initiative.

Shivaji's armed incursions into the Konkan and the Karwar districts were frequent. They were prompted by the consideration to establish Maratha supremacy in the region on firm foundations and to teach useful lessons to the local chiefs that attempted to defy him at the instigation of Bijapur. At one time or another, the Naiks of Bednur and the Rajas of Sonda, among others, felt the weight of Maratha arms. Besides, it was necessary for Shivaji to supplement his revenues with the riches that could be collected from the Konkan and Karwar ports. But his levies were not ruinous, since, as we saw earlier in this chapter, his basic aim was to promote the prosperity of those districts. For instance, during his raid on Vengurla in May 1663, he liberally distributed documents among the civilian population guaranteeing immunity from harm.

In the following year 1664 he, however, carried away "vast riches" from that place and in December the flourishing town of Hubli was thoroughly sacked, besides a number of other rich towns in the neighbourhood. Karwar escaped lightly in 1665. After making a raid by sea on Barkalur in South Canara, he dismissed the greater part of his fleet at Gokarn where he had earlier worshipped at the famous shrine of Mahabaleshwar, scoured the region, and levied a contribution from Karwar. The English factors in the town paid him £712 as their share.

It was not till ten years later that a major effort was made to capture the great fort of Phonda and to annex the Kanara coast. In that year Shivaji descended upon these districts with an army of 15,000 cavalry, 14,000 infantry and 10,000 pioneers. He detached a large body of forces to besiege Phonda which, in spite of its strong defences and the help secretly rendered to the garrison by the Portuguese, fell in May 1675. The treacherous behaviour of the foreigners was attributed to their extreme terror at the proximity of the formidable Shivaji to their chief town, Goa. Karwar also surrendered so that by May 25 "the country as far south as the Gangavali river had passed out of Bijapuri possession into his hands".

It was, however, impossible for Shivaji to establish settled conditions in the Konkan unless he overcame the lawless activities of the Siddis of Janjira. Janjira is a rocky island, forty-five miles south of Bombay, whose rulers, the Siddis, constituted the most disturbing element on the west coast. The town of Rajpuri and the fort of Danda, situated in its vicinity and both regarded as one place, were of considerable strategic importance. Guarding the mouth of the Rajpuri creek and standing on the mainland, the place became a perpetual bone of contention between the Marathas and the Siddis in the same manner as the Doab of Raichur, now in Mysore State, had provoked prolonged and implacable wars between the kings of Vijayanagar and the Sultans of Bijapur. The forbears of the Siddis had established a colony of fellow-Abyssinians at Janjira as far back as the fifteenth century. Since that period they held sway over the local population whom they oppressed in order to sustain their aggression. Waring describes the Siddis as brave, active and staunch Muslims, "hostile by religion and by interest to the rise of a Hindu Power".

The smallness of their dominion and its barrenness compelled the rulers of Janjira to seek a permanent possession of Danda-Rajpuri from where they could launch their plundering expeditions in Kolaba and Ratnagiri districts in order to fertilize their sterile economy. Since it was impossible for them to challenge with impunity a well-entrenched government in the region, they sold their services and loyalties to whichever Muslim power that was strong for the time being, readily changing sides if the exigencies of the situation so demanded. They realized the dangerous implications of the rise of the Marathas as a naval power to their own continued existence. Shivaji, whose acumen and wide-ranging vision missed nothing, saw that by capturing Danda-Rajpuri it would be possible to stop the heart-beats of Janjira.

The struggle between the Marathas and the Siddis of Janjira was long-drawn-out and bloody. Fath Khan, the Siddi chief, was a brave, resourceful and indomitable fighter. He knew that the military strength of the Marathas was infinitely superior to his own and dexterously overcame his deficiency by taking full advantage of Shivaji's distractions and misfortunes. He was no less agile in retreating to his island fortress when he realized that only thus could he save himself from the terrible vengeance of the Marathas. There is much aptness in the observation of a chronicler that the Siddis were like mice in a house! In 1659, when Afzal Khan proceeded against Shivaji, armed with a mandate from the Bijapur Government to destroy the nascent Maratha kingdom, Fath Khan fell upon the mainland in an attempt to benefit from his adversary's preoccupation, but when Afzal Khan met his doom at the foot of Pratapgad, the Siddi beat a precipitate retreat to Janjira to escape Maratha reprisals. He adopted this strategy on many other occasions.

In 1661 Shivaji concentrated his efforts and resources on the capture of Danda-Rajpuri and the onset of the monsoon in all its fury did not relax his determination to conquer the town. His pertinacity bore fruit and the much-prized place at last fell into Maratha hands. It remained in their possession for nine years, during which period Shivaji made repeated attempts from his vantage position to force Janjira's surrender. Year after year, his artillery was directed against the island, but since his guns were weak, both in their range and firing power, no great damage was done to the stronghold. Shivaji organized his conquests in Kolaba district into a new province, rebuilt the defences of Danda-Rajpuri, constructed a chain of forts to strengthen his hold on the region, and placed the charge under a competent officer, Vyankoji Datto, with a permanent contingent of 5,000 to 7,000 men to protect it. These dispositions distressed and alarmed the Siddi who was now forced to launch his depredations further south, in Ratnagiri district.

In 1669 Shivaji renewed his attack on Janjira with far greater vigour and, although he could not actually capture the island, he succeeded in reducing Fath Khan to extreme despair. Realizing the futility of waging a losing war against the Marathas, the Siddi agreed to surrender Janjira in consideration for a rich *jagir* and a large cash present. His decision to end the hostilities was, however, resented by three resolute men, Siddis Sambal, Kasim and Khairiyat, the last two being brothers. They imprisoned Fath Khan and applied to Aurangzeb to be taken under his protective wing, at the same time continuing the war against the Marathas. The Emperor was delighted and readily invested Siddi Sambal with the office of admiral of the Imperial Navy, besides conferring on him the title of Yakut Khan. To sustain his newly-acquired eminence, he received as his share three lakhs of rupees from the annual revenue of Surat. Kasim and his brother were similarly raised to dignity, with directions to remain in command of Janjira and the town of Danda-Rajpuri, although the latter was in Maratha hands.

Siddi Kasim, who had never accepted the loss of the town as a *fait accompli,* patiently bided his time, with the object of wresting it from the Marathas. Such an opportunity came to him during the *holi* holidays in 1671 when the Maratha garrison at Danda-Rajpuri, relaxing their vigilance, gave themselves up to revelry. The two Siddi brothers made a surprise attack on both the town and the fort and mercilessly cut down the defenders. To add to the misfortune of the garrison, a powder-magazine blew up, flooding the landscape with dense smoke and lurid light. Shivaji, who was then at Raigad, was awakened from his sleep by the loud report of the explosion and is stated to have exclaimed: "Something has gone wrong at Danda-Rajpuri". The victorious Siddis refused to unsheath their sword even after their great victory. "Kasim's revolting acts of cruelty," says the District Gazetteer of Kolaba and Janjira, "to men and women deepened the animosity between the Marathas and the Siddis."

The loss of Danda-Rajpuri was a bitter disappointment to Shivaji who was never able to retrieve it, although he counted no cost in his attempts to regain its possession. He reluctantly cast about for an alternative naval base from where he could effectively curb the Siddi's piratical activities. Khanderi or Kenery was the obvious choice. It is a small island near the entrance to the Bombay harbour, eleven miles south of Bombay and six miles north-west of Alibag. It is situated two and a half miles from the Kolaba mainland one and a half miles from another small island called Underi or Henery.

For no valid reason, the English in Bombay objected to the fortification of the island by the Marathas. Khanderi had never before been inhabited and its only produce was fuel. The construction of breast-works and other defences in the place was begun by the Marathas in August 1679; the English had gained possession of the island of Bombay more than one and a half decades earlier. Had they discovered that they could not live in peace and security in Bombay without gaining possession of Khanderi, they ought to have instituted appropriate proceedings in that direction much earlier and not attempted to thwart Shivaji's plans after they had been completed. Besides, Khanderi was well within his jurisdiction.

On September 19, 1679 an attempt was made by the English to force a landing on the Khanderi island, but they gave it up after suffering serious reverses at the hands of the Marathas. Renewed efforts in that direction only ended in worse defeats, compelling the discomfited foreigners to admit ruefully that they were not strong enough to dislodge Shivaji from his new acquisition. They came to this conclusion after realizing the ineffectiveness of their naval operations even with the whole-hearted support of the Siddis of Janjira. Not to be outdone by the

Marathas, Siddi Kasim promptly fortified Underi in January 1680 despite, this time, the combined protests of Shivaji and the English.

A striking feature of the behaviour of the English factors of this period, both in Bombay and Surat, was their great capacity for prevarication. It would be impossible to explain their various acts of inconsistency if they could not be traced to the inherent instability of their position both on land and at sea. Writing in January 1677 about the helpless condition of his Company in Bombay, an official lamented that the Portuguese were "ever exquisite seekers of all ways imaginable to do us mischief". During the years 1676-1680, we are told, the chief foreign sources of trouble at Bombay were the Portuguese, "the haughty neighbours", the "Malabars" or the pirates from the Malabar coast, and the Siddis of Janjira. The Siddis in fact showed scant respect for the sovereignty of the English in Bombay and entered and left the harbour at will, using the amenities provided by it with complete freedom as if the island was their own.

The English naturally resented such aggressive proceedings, but protest was dangerous. Writing to the Bombay factor on April 14, 1676, the President of Surat observed: "We are sorry the Siddi's fleet is come again to trouble your port. If he talks of staying at Bombay or at Mazgaon, you must tell him that it shall never be permitted". The President, however, suddenly became panicky at his own boldness and hastily added in the same letter an admonition to his colleague that he should be very civil in his "discourses and arguments" with the Siddi. Besides, he should not fail to supply the intruder and his men "what they may want—wood, water and provisions". We read a number of similar letters; here is an extract from President Aungier's extraordinary letter dated May 7, 1677: "Now we understand that Siddi Sambal resides at the East India House where like the hedge-hog he hath nestled himself and, liking his lodging, intends to stay there whether we will or no." Such was the position of the English during this period and the brave words that have been handed down to us about their prowess did not, as we have seen, have their counterpart in deeds.

We may conclude this chapter by recalling the observations of a few contemporary Europeans in India on the character and achievements of Shivaji. Some of them were his ardent admirers, while others were not, but all were agreed that he was an Olympian figure. In his *History of Shivaji* Abbe Carre says that the Maratha King encouraged Europeans as a deliberate policy of his government in order to promote the commerce of his realm. His ports were hospitable to their ships. "I passed," says this foreigner, "that way in 1668 with two ships of the Company and we were treated in a manner which was beyond our expectation."

The same authority points out that Shivaji was equally popular with "tradesmen and toiling merchants" whose praise he won by "his method of governing and making men's minds yield to it". We are further told that, although he possessed outstanding military abilities, he did not always draw the sword because he knew "more than one way of reaching his goal". He was in fact one who could rightly be placed among the greatest men in the world. Cosme da Guarda, another contemporary, was a sincere admirer of Shivaji whose sense of justice and fairplay he recorded with great enthusiasm. Shivaji administered justice to high and low alike with scrupulous impartiality so that his uprightness "made his subjects ever happy and his fame rose to such a height throughout Hindustan that it became as dreaded as it was cherished".

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CHAPTER 10

THE STATE

SHIVAJI's dominion was not large, but it was administered with great efficiency, imagination and benevolence. In the troubled conditions of his times, with the Moghuls constantly knocking at his door, the boundaries of his realm could not be firmly or finally fixed, but, according to Ramchandra Nilkanth, his Accountant General for ten years, the area of *swarajya* or the kingdom outside Muslim jurisdiction, extended from Salher and Ahiwant in West Khandesh in the modern State of Maharashtra to Tanjore deep in the south. Sarkar gives a more precise version of the extent of Shivaji's kingdom at the time of his death. It included all the country (except the Portuguese possessions) stretching from Ramnagar in Gujarat in the north, to Karwar or the Gangavali river in the Mysore district of Kanara in the south. The eastern boundary covered Baglana in the north and, running southwards along a fluctuating line through Nasik and Poona districts, embraced the entire Satara district, besides large portions of the Kolhapur region. A third territory comprised western Karnatak, extending from Belgaum and reaching the banks of the Tungabhadra in the present administrative district of Bellary in Mysore State. In addition, his conquests in the south covered a considerable area yielding, according to Sabhasad, an annual revenue of twenty lakh *hons*, but his premature death and the descent of Emperor Aurangzeb on the Deccan in person in less than two years after this tragic event, gave no opportunity to the Maratha Government to consolidate Shivaji's gains in the south.

It is difficult to assess the actual revenues that were derived by the new state, but they are estimated to have amounted to seven crores of rupees annually, although the actual realizations in some years were likely to have been less. For the convenience of administration and taxation the kingdom was divided into provinces and placed in charge of able and experienced governors. To draw again upon Sarkar's study, the northern province consisted of the Dangs and Baglana, the Koli country south of Surat, the Konkan north of Bombay, and the Deccan plateau south of Poona. This vital region was placed in charge of Moro Trimbak Pingle.

The Konkan region south of Bombay, Savantwadi and the coastal territory of north Kanara, formed the southern satraphy and was administered by Annaji Datto, another sagacious lieutenant of Shivaji. The third division consisted of the districts of Satara and Kolhapur, besides the large and fertile territory extending from Belgaum to the banks of the river Tungabhadra, including Dharwar district. The government of this province was entrusted to Dattajipant Kaknis. The unsettled southern province of Tanjore was placed in charge of the king's son-in-law, Harji Mahadik. The far-flung realm of Shivaji was effectively guarded by 240 forts of which as many as 111 were built in his lifetime. Seventynine of the strongholds under his jurisdiction were situated in the southern province of Madras.

Shivaji looked upon his forts almost with reverence and propagated their value among his followers by elevating them to the status of a mother. His respect and affection for them were indeed well founded since his historic career was heralded by the capture of the fort of Torna in 1647. Sheltered by the massive Sahyadri mountains, a considerable length of whose ranges was ideally suited for the construction of defensive fortresses, Maharashtra offered no easy access to the invaders. An eighteenth century foreign observer says that the government of the Peshwas extended over "a country of great natural strength, interspersed with mountains and defiles, all of which are defended by fortresses that are reserved as depots for treasure, or as retreats in the event of ill success or defeat". The writer holds that "perhaps no country on earth is better calculated for the purposes of defensive war".

Generation after generation of soldiers and strategists had watched with unseeing eyes the inestimable value of this terrain for unfurling the flag of freedom. It was, however, left to the genius of Shivaji to take full advantage of the natural strength of the country around him and to train his followers in a mode of warfare, in which skill, resourcefulness and initiative could be far more effective than mere physical strength or superiority of numbers.

The forts held a vital place in these Parthian methods of engaging the enemy. They provided much more than mere shelter from the pressure of the invading armies and served as a dependable shield against total defeat and annihilation. Indeed, during the early years of Maratha uprising the usefulness of the forts was inestimable. The scaling of forts with agility in order to recover them speedily in the event of their falling into enemy hands, became a necessary qualification for the profession of arms in Shivaji's army. As we shall see in the next chapter, even the most impregnable fortresses were captured by his men with comparative ease, so that the Marathas became justly famous in this mode of warfare.

Shivaji was endowed with an uncommonly keen perception in assessing the strategic value of a place. Both the situation and the structure of the new forts built by him amply bear this out. Many of his famous fortresses were built on hilltops, flat and rain-drenched, so that, besides providing the means for the maintenance of a large garrison, they could hurl defiance at the invaders for an almost indefinite length of time. Shivaji was well served by his engineers in making such lofty expanses really impregnable. Moro Trimbak Pingle, his Peshwa, was a man endowed with versatile talents; he was an accomplished soldier, a shrewd diplomatist and a competent administrator. To these inestimable abilities he joined the skill of a military engineer. Soon after the capture of Torna he built in its vicinity the hill-fortress of Rajgad which for long years remained the premier town of Maharashtra till the capital was shifted to Raigad. The same talented man was commissioned to build Pratapgad soon after the annexation of Javli from the Mores.

The new capital of Shivaji, Raigad, soon won distinction as the Gibraltar of the East. Another observer, also a foreigner, is even more enthusiastic in his appreciation of its strength. He says that Raigad was "the most completely impregnable place in the universe, for the enclosure of it is large enough, independent of the stores accumulated there, to grow grain sufficient for the maintenance of its garrison, which, were it but a handful of men, could with pleasure defend it against the greatest armies that could be brought to take it".

Every care was taken to ensure that the fortifications fulfilled the most exacting requirements of defence. The skill of the engineer was not always accepted as final. Khafi Khan narrates an interesting story as to how Shivaji tested the strength of the ramparts of his capital. When his engineers announced the completion of their work, he invited his followers to win a gold bracelet by scaling the hill-fort without the aid of a rope. An intrepid Maratha won the reward as well as royal appreciation by accomplishing the feat. The route followed by him was promptly sealed off with appropriate defensive walls.

Another resourceful person, this time a woman, exposed a similar weakness in the fortification by scrambling down the precipice in order to reach her home at the foot of the fort after its massive doors had been closed for the night. The exploits of the lady, who was a milk-woman, were duly reported to Shivaji who showed his admiration for her by kindly words and generous presents. The discovered loophole was also duly blocked. The result of such labour and vigilance in ensuring the soundness of the defences was most satisfying.

Foreign observers were impressed with the skill and ingenuity of Maratha builders and we have one such testimony, based on an inspection of the fortification of the fort of Jinji in the south. According to one of them, Shivaji "constructed new ramparts round Jinji, dug ditches, raised towers and bastions, and carried out all these works with a perfection of which European skill would not have been ashamed". The Maratha king devoted the same care and spent enormous sums of money on the construction of his sea-forts. Sindhudurg was the premier stronghold of its kind and deserved the panegyrist's description that it was like a luminous star in the firmament. Three thousand skilled men laboured for three years to raise the stupendous fortress towards the construction of which Shivaji sanctioned as much as one crore of *hons*.

It is only to be expected that Shivaji exercised the utmost care in organizing the defence and the management of his forts. Three senior officers, all of proved ability and integrity, were appointed to guard and administer each fort. It was the function of the *havaldar* or commandant, who was invariably a Maratha of good standing, to provide for the security of the fort, to keep a watchful eye over the duties and responsibilities of his subordinates in the combatant service, and to carry on correspondence with the government. No laxity in the performance of his duties was permitted and defaulting commandants were severely punished. Shivaji's visits to his forts were frequent and most often they were unheralded. It is a measure of his stern sense of discipline that he did not either desire or countenance any relaxation of the rules laid down for the administration of the forts even in his own case.

It was the duty of the commandant to close the doors of his fort before nightfall each day and not to open them on any account till the prescribed hour of the following morning. The king repeatedly tested his officers by himself appearing before their forts and seeking admission during the prohibited hours. It required more than ordinary courage for a *havaldar* to refuse admission to his own monarch and in the conflict between his sense of duty and the need for obedience, the latter was some times allowed to prevail. Such unfortunate men were either severely censured or punished.

There were, however, some who were made of sterner stuff and one of them was the commandant of the fort of Panhala. A heart-warming anecdote is told about him. One day, Shivaji presented himself before the fort after the gates had been closed, demanding to be let in. The *havaldar,* who was sent for, politely but resolutely refused, saying that admission into the would be possible only on the following morning. Shivaji pleaded that he could not possibly allow himself to be captured by the enemy who were, he said, hotly in his pursuit. The commandant was, however, unmoved and promised to protect his master by stationing his men on the ramparts so that no enemy troops could come close to the fort wall. At the same time, he lowered a cot and a bedding, requesting the king to retire for the night in the porch outside, with complete confidence in the ability of his servants to protect his life ! Shivaji was gratified and showed his appreciation of his subordinate's steadfast devotion to duty by holding him up as an exemplar, besides rewarding him generously.

Phirangoji Narsala, it will be recalled, was a valiant defender of the fort of Chakan when it was attacked by Shaista Khan's imperial forces. Appointed to the command of Bhupalgad, he showed less energy and determination in defending it against the Moghuls in 1679. The reasons for his seemingly strange behaviour were, however, not personal. On this occasion, the fort under his command was attacked by no less a person than Sambhaji, who had, to the detriment of his good name, defected to the Moghuls. Narsala refrained from opening fire on the enemy troops, fearing danger to the life of the heir-apparent, and thus made it easy for the invaders to capture the fort. Shivaji could see the dilemma of this seasoned and trusted servant of the state, but did not forgive him for his weakness. The unhappy Narsala was severely reprimanded "for not firing on Sambhaji and putting such a sinner to death". Such was the Maratha King's stern sense of duty and rectitude.

The second senior officer of a fort was the *Sabnis* who exercised the power of the purse. This officer was a Brahmin who was charged with the responsibility of regulating the expenditure and keeping a proper account of all financial transactions. He also maintained the muster roll of the garrison. The third officer was the *Karkhanis,* a Prabhu, who was charged with the responsibility of maintaining adequate reserves of stores of all kinds required by the garrison and of ensuring an equitable supply. His duties were many and varied and often dovetailed into those of his other two colleagues in order to promote co-operation and interdependence among the principal officers of the fort.

Shivaji showed his customary caution and shrewdness in the choice of his men for key positions. Like Hanfeitse, the great Chinese sage who lived many centuries before him, he realized the unwisdom of expecting people to be good and, therefore, concerted measures to "make it impossible for them to be bad". But the appointment of the Marathas, the Brahmins and the Prabhus to responsible offices was not entirely governed by the doctrine of counterpoise.

Perhaps, the more important reason why Shivaji drew so liberally and impartially upon these three major sections of the community was that he wished to create the most spacious opportunities for talent. Indeed, a free career to ability and enterprise never failed to appeal to him. His catholic mind and his wide-ranging vision accepted no artificial or absurd constraints on the choice of his men. The Mahars and Muslims and men of other faiths and social gradations were all welcomed into service so long as they satisfied the criteria of ability and integrity. His prejudice was, therefore, not against any religion or caste, but against incompetence and disloyalty—a principle the wholesome implications of which have still to be fully appreciated in the India of our own times.

The commandant of a fort and his colleagues were liable to transfer so that the scope for intrigue and for the creation of vested interests was minimized. In fact, Shivaji did not allow the hereditary system, the enemy of efficiency and progress, to weaken his administration. No office could be handed down from father to son unless the new incumbent deserved it. Such precautions, about which we will write more later, greatly helped Shivaji to maintain his government at a high level of efficiency. It was precisely because most of his officers shared his patriotism and enthusiasm for noble causes that no reverses, however frequent and devastating, could deflect them from the pursuit of their appointed tasks.

The fall of the forts in particular was considered worse than a disaster and no sacrifice was considered too great to wipe out the "disgrace". The Queen-Mother, Jijabai, did not hesitate to send the brave Tanaji Malusare to his doom when she peremptorily demanded her son to wrest the Lion Fort from the hands of the Moghuls. The affection with which the forts were looked upon and the fervour and determination with which they were defended did not long survive Shivaji's death. The elaborate safeguards devised by him for their defence and management were not scrupulously adhered to or enforced so that during the reign of Rajaram, his younger son, many of the senior officers of his government gained possession of them, virtually treating them as their personal property. In 1710-11, for instance, Parashurampant Pratinidhi alone controlled as many as thirty-five forts, including such famous ones as Vishalgad and Pratapgad.

Shivaji showed the same foresight in organizing his army. At the commencement of his career his striking force consisted mostly of foot-soldiers drawn from the hardy hill-men in the neighbourhood of Poona. At no time did he feel a dearth of recruits to his army since his movement of liberation strongly appealed to young and old alike. The flower of Maharashtra's youth was at his disposal, as also the enthusiastic support of the elderly members of the community. The sturdy-limbed and stout-hearted Mavlas flocked to his standard, often taking with them their horses, swords, spears and shields, in wielding which they were second to none. They were, as Grant Duff observes, "active, intelligent and remarkably faithful in situations of trust".

The mode of warfare for which they were trained was most effective, especially in the early years of the freedom movement. Creeping noiselessly close to the enemy under cover of the hills, valleys and forests, the Maratha troops struck suddenly at a bewildered enemy, raising at the same time the famous war-cry "Har Har Mahadev", which, reverberating like thunder from the lofty mountains and the deep valleys, created the illusion and fear that the number of attackers was indeed unlimited. Thus. slowly and steadily, the Maratha soldiers under Shivaji gained confidence and ability to launch both offensive and defensive warfare.

Shivaji's cavalry was extremely small when he unfurled the flag of freedom. It consisted of 1,200 household troopers and 2,000 volunteers of *shiledars* who brought their own arms and mounts with them. The conquest of Javli in 1656, besides bringing him large territories and revenues, gave him access to a large reservoir of manpower. In the result, the number of State cavalry rose to 7,000, while that of the *shiledar* to 3,000. The infantry was 10,000 strong. Two years later, he took the momentous step of recruiting 700 Pathans to his infantry, in response to the earnest plea of Gomaji Naik, an old retainer of his maternal grandfather, Jadhavarao of Sindkhed. The Pathan contingent, which had been in the employ of the Bijapur Darbar, was now placed under a Brahmin commander, Raghunath Ballal, the man who had played a leading part in the destruction of the Mores of Javli.

Ramchandra Nilkanth, the *amatya,* whom we have quoted earlier, has recorded that Shivaji's state cavalry was 40,000 strong, in addition to some 70,000 *shiledars.* His infantry, according to this chronicler, was as numerous as 200,000. The striking force of the Marathas during the King's lifetime may well be reckoned at 40,000 state troopers, besides twice that number of foot-soldiers. Their arms consisted of swords, spears and muskets, and the deficiency of an effective park of artillery remained their permanent infirmity. According to Sabhasad, Shivaji's elephants numbered 1,260, which is regarded by some writers as an exaggerated figure. His camel corps was 3,000 strong.

Shivaji believed in unity of command and created a cadre of officers in his army to enforce discipline and efficiency both on the battlefield and in the cantonment. The gradations were not as numerous as in a modern army—from subaltern to Field-Marshal—but the ranks that were created were adequate to ensure the effectiveness of the combatant service. The officer grade in the cavalry arm began with the *havaldar,* who commanded a body of twenty-five horsemen. Next in rank was the *jumladar,* who held command over five such units, numbering broadly 125 troopers. Over him was the *hazari,* who controlled ten *jumlas.* The *panchhazari,* an expressive name, may be likened in rank to the present-day Lieutenant-General. On top of the cadre was the *Sarnobat* or the Commander-in-Chief, who became the confidant and counsellor of the King, with a place in the *Ashta Pradhan* or the Cabinet of Eight Ministers. With some important modifications, the infantry branch of the armed forces was similarly organized, although the emoluments of the foot-soldiers and their officers were less than those paid to their mounted comrades. A number of civil officers were attached to the army for administrative purposes and consisted, among others, of accountants and newswriters.

Shivaji paid his officers and men well and regularly. The *Jumladar* of the cavalry received 500 *hons* a year, the *Hazari* 1,000 *hons* and the *panchhazari,* 2,000 *hons.* The purchasing power of the *hon,* the value of which varied from four to five rupees, was enormous so that the emoluments paid to the servants of Shivaji's Government were quite good. Apart from their annual salaries, the officers received various honours befitting their rank and responsibilities. Familiar among the privileges enjoyed by them was the use of the palanquin and the umbrella. In the infantry, the *jumladar* was paid 100 *hons* and the *hazari* 500 *hons.* The *havaldar* of a fort, it is presumed, was paid a salary of 125 *hons.* Apart from the regular infantry, Shivaji raised a guard brigade of 2,000 Maratha foot-soldiers who were selected specially for their manly bearing and intrepidity. They were given gorgeous uniforms and excellent weapons at great cost to the government.

Shivaji was an implacable opponent of hereditary rights and vested interests, especially when their existence militated against the security and progress of the state. It was a cardinal principle of his state policy that the emoluments of his subordinates should be fixed and paid regularly—sometimes partly in cash and partly in kind. The second mode of payment entailed no hardship to the recipients since a large segment of the economy of the time was still non-monetary. Since no service was hereditary, no permanent *jagirs* were granted to his officers. Even his closest kinsmen were not exempted from this rule. We read, for instance, that Pilaji Shirke, Shivaji's son-in-law, asked for the grant of hereditary *deshmukhi* rights to him in the town of Dabhol as a reward for rendering meritorious services to the state. Shivaji tactfully but firmly declined to de-part from the law of the land, although he was himself the lawmaker.

Shivaji saw with his own eyes the evils of the *jagir* system since it flourished, though in different forms, both under the Moghuls and in the Bijapur *darbar*. The military commanders of these governments were almost always overtaken by a serious financial embarrassment so that their troops were often sullen and disaffected. Shivaji effectively prevented this malady from gaining possession of the body politic of his state. His officers were paid regularly from the central or provincial revenues. On no account was an official permitted to collect his salary direct from the revenue of either the principal or the subordinate governments. Payments were made only by authorized persons. If a land had been granted to him, the government dues were deducted from his salary and the balance was paid to him.

In fact, Shivaji waged a relentless war against conditions that fostered the growth of the pernicious system of *imperium in imperio.* He sternly suppressed the petty barons in whom the country abounded and whose continued existence, with all their privileges and pretensions, constituted a serious menace to the state. He dismantled their castles, confiscated their properties, and enlisted the more discerning and patriotic ones among them in the service of his government. His administration was in every sense strong, clean and efficient. Naturally, he laid great stress on military service, but at the same time he interdicted any intervention of the army in the affairs of the civil government.

Shivaji showed keen interest in the recruitment of officers and men to his army. His uncanny ability to select the right type of man in his service was of inestimable value to him in in his wars against the Moghuls and the Sultans of Bijapur. He was equally meticulous in the choice of the horses for his cavalry so that his army soon became famous for the celerity of its movement. Lightly armed and equipped, the Maratha horsemen were able to cover forty to fifty miles a day, while the heavily encumbered armies of the imperialists and of Bijapur found movement of any kind most painful.

Accustomed to a simple and frugal way of life, the Maratha soldiers could live cheerfully on whatever fare and amenities they could secure from the provinces they invaded. Shivaji himself set an example in such simplicity. He forbade to himself the luxuries that were not given to his men. Foreign observers both at Surat and in the south were amazed at the King indifference to ostentation and to the seductions of an easy and comfortable life. He was a great captain who, like many of his famous equals that preceded and followed him both in his own country and in foreign lands, fully shared the trials and tribulations and the dangers of camp life with his troops, thus winning their unstinted loyalty and devotion to his person and cause.

After Shivaji's death, the Marathas lost many of the virtues which he had so assiduously taught them, but their democratic spirit and their innate love of simplicity remained in their fighting forces till the last. It was quite common to observe mighty chieftains on the battlefield, upon whose valour and judgment the issues of success and defeat depended, besides the lives of hundreds of thousands of combatants and others, performing the most humble chores at the end of the day without the slightest consciousness of their dignity or status. It was not derogatory to their honour to assist their orderlies in kindling the fire to keep themselves and their companions-at-arms warm during the night. For instance, a distinguished man was observed to sit on the ground on a spread saddle-cloth, "dictating to his secretaries and otherwise discharging the political duties of his station". This "primeval plainness" had the most salutary and decisive influence on the discipline and outlook of the entire army.

Sir John Malcolm, who played the memorable role of performing the obsequies of the Maratha Empire by compelling the abdication of the last Peshwa, Bajirao, in June 1818, had intimate knowledge of the Maratha troops, although the picture presented by them in his time was certainly not the brightest. He wrote thus about the Maratha soldier: "Few could claim superiority to him in patience under fatigue, hunger, and thirst, and in that plain manliness of character which remained unchanged by success or adversity: nor can we deny to the Mahrattás, in the early part of their history, and before their extensive conquests had made their vast and mixed armies cease to be national, the merit of conducting their Cossack inroads into other countries with a consideration to the inhabitants, which had been deemed incompatible with that terrible and destructive species of war."

Such a high tribute was indeed well deserved. The Marathas did not depend entirely upon mere physical prowess. Under the resourceful leadership of their master they made free use of skill and strategy, to which were added certain sterling moral principles. They lived for eight months in a year outside their home territories and were disciplined to observe certain norms of conduct violation of which involved severe punishment.

First, all the spoils collected during their expedition were required to be made over to the state, the troops retaining nothing for their personal use. Secondly, women, places of worship, cows and sacred books were not to be insulted on any account. Indeed, this rule was enforced with such strictness that "a brave Mughal governor once deemed it safe to leave in a woman's garb when the Marathas appeared at the gates of his city". Shivaji was equally insistent that no soldier should take with him his wife or any other woman during the military expeditions.

It is precisely because the Marathas under Shivaji were trained to be considerate and respectful towards the civilian population and to observe certain commendable standards of behaviour that their expeditions were not regarded as a calamity. "In their first invasion of Central India," writes Sir John Malcolm, "the war the Mahrattas carried on was evidently against the Government, and not the inhabitants. They appear, at this stage of their power, to have taken a large share of the revenue, but not to have destroyed, like more barbarous invaders, the source from which it was drawn, for if they had, it could not have recovered so rapidly, as we find from revenue records that it did. But there is in the whole of the proceedings of this period, the strongest ground to conclude, that they were acting with the concurrence and aid of the Hindu chiefs of the empire, whose just reasons for discontent with the reigning monarch, Aurangzebe, have been noticed."

Lastly, Shivaji and his men were animated by a high sense of mission which helped them face their difficulties with a stout heart. Compared to the military resources and equipment of the imperialists and the Sultans of Bijapur, their own means were incredibly inadequate, but they overcame this serious handicap through superior discipline, greater mobility and hardihood and, what is more important, from the conviction that their cause was just and noble. The potency of patriotism has been repeatedly proved in history. The Anglo-Nepalese War may be cited as an instance in point. Though hopelessly outnumbered and equipped with the most primitive weapons, the humble hill-men of the Himalayas, who had never known military training or discipline, fought the mighty forces of the East India Company, led by renowned British generals, with such skill and doggedness that the campaign of 1814-15 electrified the entire country, with people in far-off places watching its fortunes with bated breath.

Writing with evident consternation at British discomfiture, Sir Charles Metcalfe declared: "We have met an enemy who shows decidedly greater bravery and greater steadiness than our troops possess; and it is impossible to say what may be the end of such a reverse of the order of things. In some instances, our troops, European and native, have been repulsed by inferior numbers with sticks and stones. In others, our troops have been charged by the enemy sword in hand, and driven for miles like a flock of sheep......... Our power rested solely on our military superiority. With respect to one enemy, that is gone. In this war, dreadful to say, we have had numbers on our side, and skill and bravery on the side of our enemy."

In the bitter, long-drawn-out and sanguinary conflict between the Marathas and the Moghuls, the plight of the imperialists was precisely like that of the British. The Marathas in their turn eventually lost their military supremacy and gave place to a foreign power when, according to some writers, their armies were deprived of their homogeneity and national spirit.

Apart from the land revenue, an important source of income for the Maratha Government was *chouth* and *sardeshmukhi. Chouth,* representing twenty-five per cent. of the standard assessment of the land revenue, was collected by the Marathas from the subjects of other states. The levy was not their invention, since it had been in vogue earlier and was employed as a source of revenue by some of the principalities, including Dharampur. Like Lord Wellesley, who transformed an undefined subsidiary system into a potent political instrument by perfecting it, Shivaji made *chouth* a famous impost by systematizing its levy. *Chouth* was not an instrument of oppression, but a payment that exempted the contributing region from Maratha invasion. The primary object of its collection was revenue, since Maharashtra's own resources were totally inadequate to finance a costly war against the imperialists and Bijapur. The superb intelligence service of Shivaji, which played no small part in his successful military campaigns, safeguarded against oppressive exactions, since the Maratha Government was placed in full possession of the economic condition of the regions visited by its armies. Many instances have been recorded where towns and districts that were scheduled to pay the full amount of the *chouth* were permitted to contribute a much smaller sum.

Apart from the necessity of increasing his revenue by the only means available to him, Shivaji, according to all impartial testimony, was fully entitled to collect *chouth* from unfriendly states as a political measure. To quote Sir John Malcolm again: "The contests carried on by Shivaji and his successors did not differ more from those of other nations in the mode of warfare, than in the manner in which the army was paid, its commanders rewarded, and the different countries they invaded, were plundered, divided and settled." The same authority has been quoted earlier to show that the incidence of the levy was not extortionate. *Sardeshmukhi* was not a noteworthy impost and was confined to some areas of the Deccan, over which Shivaji claimed revenue rights, based on the assertion that he was their *Sardeshmukh*.

Shivaji's navy was not as formidable as his land armies were. His most cherished ambition of conquering Janjira by crushing the Siddis remained unfulfilled. Apart from their great seafaring abilities, the Siddis operated on the waters of the Arabian Sea with the support and sanction of either the Bijapur Government or the Imperialists. As on land, Shivaji's exertions on the seas were wholly unaided, their success depending entirely upon his own initiative and enterprise. Being locked in mortal combat with the Imperialists and the Adilshahs on land, he could not devote the time and money that were essential for the construction of a powerful navy.

Nevertheless, his achievements in that direction were impressive. Perhaps, his most noteworthy contribution to the naval history of western India is that he broke the shackles of superstition by destroying the Hindu prejudice against sea voyage. It was not within his means to revive the glorious maritime traditions of ancient or medieval times, when Indian vessels roamed the high seas in their hundreds, carrying the merchandise and the culture of this country to distant lands, but by building his own ships and launching them both for trade and war, he made it possible for his people to defend their hearths and homes in the coastal Konkan and to participate, however modestly, in the maritime trade. In contrast, the helplessness of the Moghuls on the seas was complete.

Old chroniclers like Sabhasad and Chitnis have given different accounts about the number of ships built by Shivaji. Their estimates range from 400 to 500 vessels. It is, however, generally believed that his navy consisted of a fleet of 200 fighting vessels of varying size and effectiveness. They ranged from the fragile dug-out vessels to stately three-masted *ghurabs*. The biggest warship weighed between 150 tons and 300 tons and both for its seaworthiness and usefulness in naval warfare it compared favourably with the Portuguese and the English frigates of those times. The battleships were equipped with two big guns and twelve to sixteen smaller ones, but their firing power was rather limited. The cannon cast in Indian foundries was woefully defective, while that of foreign manufacture was seldom available. A *ghurab* was generally manned by some 150 fighting men whose modes of engaging the enemy were almost similar to land warfare. The *gallivats* were better suited for manoeuvrability and formed the backbone of the Maratha navy. They were two-masted rowing boats capable of gathering good speed. Many of the senior commanders of Shivaji's navy were Muslims who served him with as much courage, determination and fidelity as his own co-religionists. The names of Daulat Khan and Siddi Misri, among others, have come down to us as the men who made the Maratha cause their own.

After Shivaji's death the command of the Maratha navy passed into the competent hands of Kanhoji Angre and his successors. The Angres won a great reputation as sea-captains and were both respected and feared by the maritime powers on the west coast, both Indian and European. Indeed, by their daring exploits the Angres have won an honoured place in the maritime history of India.

Shivaji's land revenue system was based on the time-honoured belief and conviction that the peasant was, as he still is, the country's backbone. He was not only the tiller of the soil, but the swordarm of the state. His contentment and well-being, therefore, claimed the magnitude of state policy in Shivaji's administration. Competent observers have recorded that the farmers were happy under his government. The basic features of his land revenue administration were derived from the dispositions of his preceptor, Dadaji Konddev, who, in his turn, was influenced by the measures of the great Muslim statesman of the Nizamshahi Government, Malik Ambar. Though a foreigner, this sagacious man did for the Deccan peasantry what Akbar's Minister, Todar Mal, did for that of north India. "Like Todar Mal", says Dr. Sen, "he divided the arable lands into four separate classes according to fertility and ascertained their produce, roughly it is true, and fixed the assessment once for all. He, however, did not want the peasants to pay in kind." He reorganized the agency for revenue collection and made the offices of the *Patil* and other village officials hereditary, charging them with the responsibility for ensuring the collection of the government dues in full.

Shivaji improved upon this system in many ways. The cultivable area of every village was carefully noted and the extent of each plot of land was measured, not with the traditional rope or chain, but with a standard measuring rod. Assessment was determined on the basis of the fertility of the soil. "An estimate," we are informed, "was made of the expected produce of each *bigha,* three parts of which were left to the peasant and two parts taken by the state." Extension of agricultural operations was encouraged by distributing seeds among the pioneering peasants and buying cattle for them. Loans granted for such purposes were recovered by easy instalments and exemptions from payment were liberally given during bad seasons.

Shivaji made a clean sweep of all intermediaries and put an end to the widespread evil of tax-farming by bringing the peasent in direct relations with the revenue officials of the central government. The village officers, namely, the *Patils,* the *Kulkarnis* and the *Deshmukhs,* were not given a *carte blanche* in the matter of revenue collections, although they performed other duties and received their emoluments as before. It was a salutary check, since under the Moghuls and the Deccan Sultans. it had become customary for the village officers to appropriate the bulk of the collections for their own use, remitting only a negligible portion of the revenue to the government. It was with the aid of such ill-gotten resources that they grew in strength which they often employed to defy the central authority. Shivaji rendered them ineffective by organizing his administration on a more efficient basis.

Besides providing for the management of the forts, as described earlier, Shivaji sub-divided the provinces into *subhas* and *mahals,* very much in the manner of the present-day district and taluka administration. The average revenue of a *mahal* ranged from three-fourths of a lakh to over one lakh of rupees. A *subha* consisted of two or three such mahals. The head of the *subha* was called *Subhadar,* who was a man of considerable prestige and one who enjoyed the full confidence of the central government. His annual salary was 400 *hons.* Apart from his other duties, it was the function of this officer and his subordinates in the *mahals,* known as the *Mahalkaris,* to administer the land revenue within their jurisdiction. Two or three villages were grouped together and placed in charge of an official called the *Kamavisdar,* who directly collected the land revenue under the direction of the *mahal* and the *Subha* revenue officers. Shivaji, who was deeply nurtured in the traditions of ancient India, was evidently aware of the injunction of the textbook writers that taxes should be collected in the same manner as the bee gathers honey from flowers. Indeed, his land revenue policy worked well and conduced to the growth of the population of his kingdom and its prosperity.

The complex machinery of government, civil and military, devised by Shivaji was sustained by his unique personality. It needed his personal guidance and authority for its efficient operation, but the growing burdens of an administration that differed fundamentally from the prevailing ones called for the assistance of a team of seasoned officials who could be trusted to carry out loyally and diligently the policies and programmes prescribed by the king. Shivaji was generously endowed with the capacity for masterful leadership, but in the wider interests of his cause he always associated wise and experienced men in his undertakings. He was both humble and sagacious enough to realize the manifest absurdity of any ruler claiming himself to be the state.

All the Talmud of interpretation that has been built around the famous *Ashta Pradhan* system would have been found to be wholly unnecessary if this simple fact had been recognized. The *Ashta Pradhan* was neither a cabinet in the modern sense of the term, consisting of eight duly elected ministers answerable to a constitutional king, nor was it a cabal of clever officials created with the object of advancing the personal interests of a despot. It was simply an institution which, far from divesting the king of his unlimited powers, helped him in exercising them with wisdom and moderation and with a view to promoting the well-being of the people. The powers entrusted to each member of the *Ashta Pradhan* support this point of view.

Shivaji did not begin his kingly responsibilities with eight ministers around him. In fact, that number was not reached till 1674, that is, barely six years before his death. Chief in this team of expert advisers and executives was the *Peshwa* or the prime minister. It was undoubtedly a position of great responsibility and dignity. The government of the realm was conducted under the orders of the Peshwa during the king's absence. He was to supervise the working of the administration and to ensure its efficiency. All letters and charters issued by the king bore the seal of the Peshwa. The times demanded that the chief minister should also be a man of the sword and lead armies against the enemy. His salary was commensurate with his standing as the first servant of the state and amounted to 15,000 *hons* a year.

The *Majumdar* or *Amatya* performed the role of the present-day auditor-general and carefully checked the income and expenditure of the government. He kept the king fully informed about the financial position of the administration.

It was the duty of the *Waknis* or the *Mantri* to compile a careful and comprehensive daily record of the activities of the king and of the members of the royal family, besides functioning as master of ceremonies. He was required to exercise a careful watch over the men that were invited to meet the king and to lunch or dine with him.

The fourth officer was the *Sachiv,* known in Persian as *Surnis.* He was in charge of the king's correspondence and ensured that both in content and in style it conformed to royal wishes and the convention of the times. His seal of approval was essential on all the correspondence of the king. He was in addition called upon to check the accounts of the provinces.

The foreign secretary was called *Sumant,* its Persian equivalent being *Dabir.* He advised his sovereign on foreign affairs and received ambassadors from other states on behalf of his government. He was to keep himself fully informed about the happenings outside the realm and to ensure that the government of his master was held in high esteem at other courts.

The duties of the *Panditrao* were to promote learning and in the *Ashta Pradhan.* Known as *Senapati* or *Sarnobat,* he was to watch over the interests of his officers and men with the unsleeping eyes of Argus. The troops must be in the highest state of efficiency and measures designed to promote this end should be promptly adopted. The Commander-in-Chief should keep the king fully posted with the happenings in his department. He should also lead his armies in war and arrange for the integration of the conquered territories into the realm.

The duties of the *Panditrao* were to promote learning and piety in the land and to reward scholarship generously. Men devoted to the pursuit and the propagation of knowledge and enlightenment should never bo allowed to suffer destitution or seek asylum outside the state for their livelihood. Besides, he should attract scholars from the rest of the country and suitably reward them for their attainments. He also settled religious disputes and generally ensured that the theological injunctions laid down for the governance of the society were scrupulously observed.

The *Nyayadish* was the highest judicial authority in the kingdom and settled both civil and criminal cases that were brought in appeal before him. The village *panchayats,* which enjoyed considerable local autonomy settled most of the disputes that arose in their villages.

All the ministers of the *Ashta Pradhan,* with the exception of the last two, namely, the *Panditrao* and the *Nyayadish,* were required to be on active service, should such a need arise, so that they were proficient as much in the arts of war as in the arts of peace. Everyone of the officers appointed by Shivaji to these responsible positions performed his duties with exemplary devotion and ability. Besides these men, he was ably served by his personal secretary, Balaji Avji, whose quiet competence and attachment to his master have won for him a unique place in the Maratha history. Nila Prabhu, Shivaji's Persian Secretary, distinguished himself for his penmanship and the letter of protest against Aurangzeb's intolerance, drafted by him for his master, is remembered as much for its dignity and loftiness of sentiment as for its style.

It was with the aid of such men, inspired by a sense of mission, that Shivaji governed his country. But he remained the sole architect and builder of the mighty edifice of *swarajya.* He commanded the unswerving loyalty of his subordinates, the affection and admiration of his people and indeed of all discerning men in the country, as much on account of his sterling character as his towering abilities. His administration was pure and efficient because he became widely known as an implacable foe of every kind of jobbery, intrigue and dubious behaviour. He heartily hated the social drones that contributed nothing to the common good but enjoyed large hereditary landed estates. He certainly did not seek to anticipate the socialist or welfare state of our modern conception, but by sincerely striving for the common weal, he unwittingly led his kingdom in that direction. His administration could justly claim this distinction because he was able to dismiss, to borrow Burke's famous phrase, "rank and office and title and all the solemn plausibilities of the world" as mere glitter without substance and devote his entire attention and energy to the well being of his people.

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CHAPTER 11

THE COMRADES

AMONG the many remarkable qualities with which Shivaji was endowed, the ability to attract talent was one. Like all great leaders, he had a natural capacity for separating the chaff from the grain. His shrewd and unerring judgment of men and things was vastly helped by his training and outlook. Nothing escaped his penetrating perception. As the son of a prominent *Sardar,* with large estates in the countryside, he had ample opportunities for making a careful study of the quality and the character of the diverse elements that comprised the then Indian society. The Emperor and the Sultans were regarded as the supreme embodiments of God's creation and their gratification and appeasement constituted the *sumum bonum* of the existence of their statellites. Few among the nobles that surrounded their monarchs had the courage of their convictions.

As we saw earlier, the mental outlook of the Marathas till the advent of Shivaji as an exemplar of national resurgence was even more deplorable. There was nothing in their aspirations that was noble or heart-warming. They eagerly sold their swords either to the Sultans or to the Emperors, asking for nothing more elevating in return than *jagirs* for their personal enjoyment and a patronizing nod from their overlords. It is a moot point whether the numerous Maratha names, with which the pages of history are dotted, would have won any recognition at all if there had been no Shivaji. In no country have ill-considered sacrifices been admired or cherished. It is inconceivable that men like Baji Prabhu and Tanaji Malusare would have won legendary fame if their heroic exploits and sacrifices had been made merely to sustain the *status quo.* Like the bloom of flowers in the wilderness going unnoticed, their great deeds would have been buried deep in the bowels of oblivion.

Shivaji's life and career have saved us from such a sterile vista of the past. It is a past that abounds in heroic and epoch-making episodes, not only in his own career, but also in that of his lieutenants, most of whom considered themselves twice blessed if they could lay down their lives in the service of their friend and leader. Indeed, the bonds of comradeship that united him to his men were of a quality that transcended the relations that normally subsist between a master and his subordinate.

It was a unique relationship and had little in common with the one that existed, for example, between Aurangzeb and Mirza Raja Jai Singh. The Raja's capacity for sacrifice on behalf of his sovereign was no less considerable, but it lacked the sublime quality that is derived from the championship of worthy causes. It is for this reason that we look upon this eminent Rajput, not as a person worthy of emulation, but as a tragic figure who wantonly or unwittingly spurned a distinguished place in history by his failure to subordinate his self to the country's wider interests. To cite another but a general and a relatively recent example, the sufferings and sacrifices of generation after generation of Indian soldiers under British rule have not won the recognition they would undoubtedly have deserved had they been made for the liberation and the greater glory of their own motherland. The cause for which sacrifices are made is thus as important as the sacrifices themselves.

Shivaji's goal was just and noble, but no less attractive was his personality. His engaging appearance and magnetism, his sobriety, his resourcefulness, his concentration of purpose, his fearlessnes and his personal rectitude were qualities that deeply impressed his friends and foes alike. He abhorred ostentation and preferential treatment for himself. His deep and abiding love for the humble hillmen of Maharashtra, who constituted the backbone of his great movement, not only protected him from the perversities of the times, but also stimulated in him a true and healthy sense of values.

Like many great military commanders, he spurned discriminatory amenities on the battlefield. He fought, ate and slept alongside his comrades, always placing himself before them as a worthy example for emulation. Not for him were palaces of canvas in camp, provided with the choicest luxuries which the world of his time could produce. By his Spartan simplicity he stimulated the conviction among his troops that he went to the front, not for self-indulgence, but to defeat the enemy. The contrast presented by the pomp and splendour of the Moghul camp was significant.

The second outsanding characteristic of Shivaji was his fearlessness and tireless energy. His courage became proverbial. In every engagement, where his personal appearance could decide the issue, he was always in the forefront, striking terror into the hearts of the enemy by his energetic attacks. He showed great sagacity and thoroughness in ascertaining through his superb intelligence service both the strength and the weakness of the opposing forces and fell upon them with relentless fury once he knew where to strike. His short and wiry frame was specially made to endure any fatigue. The celerity of his movement and its secrecy deeply mystified and discomfited his enemies. His lightly-armed and fast-moving cavalry acquired under his leadership and that of his lieutenant, Netaji Palkar, a felicity in manoeuvre and attack which proved most potent when dealing with slow-moving and heavily-equipped Moghul forces.

Orme the well-known English historian, gives Shivaji the highest tribute by holding that in courage, resourcefulnes and quickness of action he had few equals in his time. No general ever traversed as much ground as he did at the head of armies. "He met," writes the historian, "every emergency of peril, however sudden and extreme, with instant discernment and unshaken fortitude. The ablest of his officers acquiesced to the imminent superiority of his genius, and the boast of the soldier was to have seen Shivaji charging sword in hand."

In many ways Shivaji was the *beau ideal* of a soldier. His courage and his ever-flowing combative energy filled his men and others with wonder, often stimulating them to similar feats of endurance and valour. He did not believe in measureless sacrifices in order to win evanescent victories. Unjustified carnage invariably repelled him. It is precisely because his methods of warfare comprised an infinite variety of ruses and strategems that victory invariably crowned his exertions. To these inestimable qualities he added a moral gift of leadership that inspired, as in the case of Hannibal, the devoted loyalty of his troops. Shivaji, says Justice Ranade, "attracted towards himself all that was hopeful and aspiring in the land, without distinction of class or caste or creed or colour". Few among the men that accepted his leadership proved faithless to him which, says the same distinguished authority, is "the highest privilege of genius".

Apart from other reasons, such loyalty was willingly rendered because the King watched over the interests of his soldiers with the greatest care, whether they were in cantonment or on the battlefield. Instructions were issued to the commanders and the governors of his realm to bring to his notice the names of men who distinguished themselves in war. Such soldiers were promptly honoured either by increased remuneration or by promotion to the higher rank. Thus, every member of the armed forces was animated by the resolution to exert himself to the utmost in the cause of his king and country, being convinced that merit would always receive its due recognition and reward.

"Shivaji," says the Portuguese writer, Cosme da Guarda was "naturally loved by all men of valour and good conduct". There was a reciprocal understanding and affection between him and his men so that the fighting apparatus created by him soon developed into a powerful people's army, held together by a community of language, thought and sentiment. New leaders came to the fore, unreservedly placing their newly-discovered but considerable talents at the disposal of the state. A good number of them were like Berthier, Massena and Augereau, French commanders of humble, origin who owed their distinction entirely to Napolean's discovery of their abilities.

Thousands of skilled and strong hands helped Shivaji in rearing the edifice of *swarajya.* Men of all classes and creeds enthusiastically took part in the great enterprise of building a new order in the country. The Pathan from the wilds of the North-West Frontier fought shoulder to shoulder with his Hindu comrade-in-arms in sustaining and strengthening the new creation. The sea-faring Muslim from the Konkan was received with open arms in the Maratha navy and given positions of trust and responsibility without the slightest suspicion or fear that the ties of religion would triumph over his sense of loyalty and obligation. Indeed, the Muslim in the Maratha service had little to fear. He was assured of regular pay and promotion—a rare blessing, taking into account the bad record of the chronically impecunious Muslim governments—good and impartial treatment and a complete liberty of conscience.

We have already referred to the brave defenders of the hill-forts among whom the names of Phirangoji Narsala and Murar Baji are justly famous. Indeed, the number of men who distinguished themselves in Shivaji's service was legion, but the rest of this chapter will be devoted to a brief description of the heroism displayed by Baji Prabhu and Tanaji Malusare during his lifetime and by Santaji Ghorpade after his death.

Baji Prabhu was the *Deshpande* of Hirdas Maval and an adherent of the Mores of Javli till the principality was overrun in 1656 and annexed to Shivaji's territories. At first it was impossible for Baji Prabhu to appreciate the rights and wrongs of the Javli episode, but it did not take him long to become an enthusiastic supporter of the new movement in Maharashtra. The engaging radiance of Shivaji's personality, the loftiness of his aims, and the need for a change from an iniquitous *status quo,* decided him to take a significant step in his life. Thenceforward he became a staunch friend and comrade of Shivaji. The cricumstances in which Shivaji shut himself up in the fort of Panhala in 1660 and how he escaped from the besieging armies of Bijapur have been described in an earlier chapter. He made his escape on the dark night of July 13 and, escorted by a contingent of Maratha troops led by Baji Prabhu, proceeded towards Vishalgad, twenty-seven miles from Panhala.

Baji Prabhu would perhaps have won no place in history and ended his life in relative obscurity if Shivaji and his party had reached their destination in safety. But Fazl Khan, the son of Afzal Khan, had sworn implacable enmity against the Marathe King and was too wary to let go so good an opportunity to fulfil his heart's desire. The surprise and disappointment caused by his adversary's escape from Panhala gave greater keenness to his pursuit. The troops that accompanied him were much larger than the Maratha contingent and the flaming torches with which he and his men were equipped, greatly helped him to gain upon his enemy.

Shivaji's anxiety increased with the day-break. Fazl was now close upon his heels and there was no means of shaking off the pursuer except by giving him battle. Taking hurried counsel with his commrades, Shivaji decided on such a course of action and ordered Baji Prabhu to face the Bijapuri troops, for which undertaking he was given half of the contingent. He himself continued the journey with the rest of his men. The instructions to Baji Prabhu were clear and categorical. He should on no account allow the enemy to get past him and should retreat or take any other measures for the safety of his contingent only after hearing the report of the cannon from Vishalgad as a signal of Shivaji's safe arrival in the fort.

Baji Prabhu promptly occupied the narrow pass known as Ghodkhind or 'horse ravine' from where he made a determined stand against the pursuers. He knew the momentous character of his mission; he was responsible for the safety of a man of destiny. This thought fortified his resolution to repel the assailants till the last man in his contingent lived. Fazl repeatedly tried to break through the defenders of the pass, but failed. The unequal battle raged for hours, with the valiant defenders clinging desperately to their positions.

Confronted by heavy odds, the small numbers of the Marathas were gravely depleted with each attack by the enemy. The situation was indeed desperate and yet Baji Prabhu and his men held on doggedly, with no thought of yielding to the enemy. At last, five hours after Baji Prabhu had taken his defensive position at the Ghodkhind pass, the announcement of Shivaji's safe arrival at Vishalgad was heard. Seven hundred valiant Marathas had by then laid down their lives for the sake of their master, with their commander, Baji Prabhu, himself being desperately wounded.

The dying hero was, however, jubilant. He had done his duty and thus saved his king and his realm from danger. He asked for no better reward in this life and died a happy man. "The defence of Rangana," says Dennis Kincaid, "has become legendary in Western India. The action is remarkable as an example of the spirit which Shivaji's leadership had infused into his followers." The action at the Khind has been rightly compared to the famous battle of Thermopylae, thus ensuring that the heroic role played by Baji Prabhu and his men on a critical occasion will be remembered as long as good and great deeds are considered worthy of commemoration.

Perhaps, no episode in Maratha history has stirred the hearts of the Maratha people as deeply as the death of Tanaji Malusare, the conqueror of the Lion Fort. The Treaty of Purandar (June 1665) had forced Shivaji to surrender twentythree forts to the Moghuls, including Sinhgad. The cession of historic strongholds galled the pride of the Marathas and none felt the humiliation more keenly than the Queen-Mother. The loss of Sinhgad in particular had made her inconsolable. Shivaji, however deeply he loved his mother, could not gratify her wish, for the reconquest of the stupendous fortress was considered almost impossible.

Sinhgad or Kondana, as it was originally called is situated on the eastern side of the great Sahyadri range, about twelve miles from Poona. It communicates with the Purandar hills on the east and west by high and narrow ridges, while on the north and south it presents a huge rugged mountain with a sharp ascent of nearly half a mile. From the slopes rises a great wall of black rock more than forty feet high, crowned by the fortifications of Sinhgad. The fortifications consist of a strong stone wall flanked with towers and enclose a nearly triangular space about two miles round. The exterior presents on all sides a stupendous barrier so that, except by the gates, access to the fort is almost impossible. Such a strong castle was commanded by a noted Moghul soldier, Uday Bhan, who was given picked troops of Rajputs, Arabs and Pathans to guard it.

There was a manifest disinclination on the part of Shivaji and his lieutenants to force the pace for the reconquest of Sinhgad since they knew the disastrous consequences of any such precipitate attempt. But Jijabai refused to share their hesitation. One morning, says the Ballad of Sinhgad* while she was combing her hair at Pratapgad, she suddenly saw through the window of her palace the Lion Fort, "gleaming in the February air". The poignant thought that it did not belong to her son made her unhappy. She summoned a rider and ordered him to go in all haste to Shivaji, then in residence at Rajgad, and tell him that she desired his immediate presence before her. The call was indeed urgent, for, in the expressive language of the ballad:

"Within his walls my son may dine,
But bid him wash his hands in mine."

Shivaji promptly responded to his mother's summons, without knowing the reasons for its peremptoriness, but his heart sank within him when he heard what she wanted from him. He pleaded earnestly but in vain that the conquest of Sinhgad called for Herculean efforts which he was not, in the difficult circumstances prevailing, able to make.

"To win it (he explained) went forth many, but
There came back never any;
Oft planted was the mango seed, but nowhere
grows the tree."

Jijabai was, however, adamant. Dreading his mother's displeasure more than the hazards of the undertaking, he cast about for a suitable man to whom he could entrust the perilous task. Who else could he be if not Tanaji Malusare, his boon companion from boyhood and a man of iron will who almost invariably accompanied him on all historic occasions?

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* This is distinct from the one translated by H. A. Acworth who has called it *The Ballad of Tanaji Maloosre*. Both are quoted in these pages.

Tanaji was in the village of Umrathe or Umbrat in the Mahad taluka of Kolaba, engaged in celebrating his son's wedding to the "fairest damsel in the Konkan", when the call came to him to appear before his king at Rajgad. Neither the festivities nor the earnest entreaties of the bridegroom to delay his departure could detain him in the village. Collecting his retainers, he sped post-haste to Shivaji, accompanied by his eighty-year old uncle Shelarmama, and his brother Suryaji. Shivaji, who did not have the heart to tell his dear comrade that he had been summoned to his doom, directed Tanaji to the Queen-Mother to hear from her the nature of his mission. She told him:

> "Of all the Bhosle's barons men shall deem thee as the first,
> Nay, I shall be thy mother and Shivaji thy brother,
> If thou wrest the Lion's fortress from the rule of the accurst".

Undaunted by the terrifying nature of his mission, the lion-hearted knight from the Konkan marched towards the fortress with his men, reaching it unnoticed on a clear, cold, still and moonless night, "the ninth of the dark fortnight of the month of Magh"—February 1670. He had taken with him Shivaji's favourite *ghorpad* or lizard to assist in scaling the fort wall. The creature, to whose waist a cord was tied, refused to climb the fort, as if to warn Tanaji of the impending disaster. The *subhadar* as Tanaji was called, was furious and threatened to kill it if it tried to play prophet to him! The frightened lizard sped to the hill-top and fixing its talons firmly in the heath helped the Marathas to clamber the cliff.

But scarcely before 300 men had reached the top, their arrival was detected by the guards. The sentries were pounced upon and slain by the Marathas, but the shouting and the clash of arms that accompanied the proceedings thoroughly roused the garrison. Tanaji was now faced with a grave dilemma. With 700 of his men still at the foot of the fort, he was forced to engage an enemy that greatly outnumbered his troops. He, however, did not take long to make up his mind and ordered his men to charge. The Marathas fought with desperate valour, knowing that neither timely succour nor escape was possible. Uday Bhan, the Moghul commander, who had lain "drenched in lust and wine", was apprised of the invasion. Donning his armour and armed with a mighty sword, he rushed to the blood-drenched battlefield in search of his chief adversary, Tanaji.

The two formidable men came face to face, each determined to destroy the other. The dice were, however, heavily loaded against the Maratha warrior. The long night march to the foot of the fort, the tremendous exertion involved in scaling the difficult cliff, the anxiety that weighed upon him by his failure to secure the arrival of all his men inside the stronghold, and the desperate hand-to-hand fighting in which he had been continually engaged before confronting Uday Bhan, had taken a heavy toll of Tanaji's energy. But his spirit and courage never flagged. Uday Bhan, an accomplished swordsman, was hampered by none of these handicaps. The ballard describes the fall of Tanaji in these moving words:

"As the lightning-flash descends where the Indrayani wends,
When the thunder-clouds are gathered around Visapur in
Jest (Jyestha) *
On Malusare fell the blow, beating sword and sword-arm low,
And Tanaji, the Lion, fell cloven to the waist."

The death of their leader unnerved the Marathas, but the timely arrival of Suryaji, who had by then entered the fort, and his exhortation to his men to fight courageously, saved the situation. In the fierce battle that ensued the Moghul commander was killed. The garrison was routed and several hundred soldiers, to save themselves from the fury of the invaders, ventured over the rock and were dashed to pieces in the attempt.

It was a great victory for the Marathas, but there was no elation in their camp. The news of the victory was conveyed to the King who rushed to the fort, eager to congratulate his friend, but to his dismay he saw the brave man's dead body. His grief was tremendous:

* The third month in the Hindu Calendar.

"Twelve days the king wept o'er him
for the great love that he bore him."

The sorrow of the Queen-Mother was no less profound. The ballad. translated by Acworth, reads:

"The scarf removed, she saw his face,
'No worthier chief of Kshatri race',
'Twas thus she wail'd 'e'er drew a sword
Before the armies of his lord.
Shivaji, son and king, today
Thy goodliest limb is lopp'd away"
Nor less the monarch to his chief
The tribute paid of royal grief."

Shivaji immortalized the sacrifice of his friend by exclaiming: "I have got the fort, but I have lost the lion"—a laconism that has deservedly became famous in Maratha history.

Santaji Ghorpade was among the younger generals who rose to prominence as a stout-hearted defender of the Maratha kingdom after Shivaji's death. Santaji had seen active service in many theatres of war during the King's lifetime, but the opportunity to display his abilities as an outstanding military commander came to him in full measure during the convulsive period that marked the history of the Marathas after 1680, the year of Shivaji's death. The misfortunes that overtook the Deccan highlanders after this melancholy event were overwhelming. Sambhaji, who shared many of his father's abilities, would undoubtedly have consolidated and enlarged the heritage of independence bequeathed by the founder, had he been endowed with one more gift, namely, stability of character. He paid a terrible penalty for this deficiency and, falling into the hands of the Moghuls, was cruelly done to death by Aurangzeb in March 1689.

The Emperor, who had arrived in the Deccan towards the end of 1681 with a large army, determined not to return to his capital till he had accomplished the total destruction of the Marathas, was jubilant that the prospect of reaching his long-cherished goal was extremely bright, now that he had murdered the founder's son. Rajaram, Shivaji's second son, upon whom the responsibility for protecting the kingdom from annihilation fell, was known to be mild-mannered and good-natured. Could he rise to the occasion by making an abundant display of masterful leadership? Much to the disappointment of his enemies and to the elation of his nation, he did. What was equally fortunate, thanks to the enduring influence of his father's genius, a band of competent men came forward to assist him in the darkest hour of Maharashtra's history.

Ramchandra Nilkanth, the progenitor of the Amatya family of Bavda in Kolhapur district, was a man of great vision and sagacity. He had been trained under Shivaji and knew well the art of promoting concord and concerted action among the self-willed leaders of government. He was himself not a man of the sword, but he was gifted with the rare spirit of rousing others to great heights of heroism. Santaji Ghorpade and Dhanaji Jadhav were conspicuous among his lieutenants who shattered the imperialists' dream of conquest. Rajaram's warm tribute to Ramchandrapant presents the true measure of the Amatya's valuable services to the nation. "The Maratha kingdom," declared the King, "is a gift from the gods. Ramchandrapant saved it from a grave crisis by creating a band of leaders in its defence after a careful appraisal of their individual abilities. He made the best use of the nation's resources for protecting it from the aggression of the imperialists. Providence has crowned his endeavours with success, while defeating the designs of the enemy."

Dhanaji Jadhav, one of the two outstanding captains under Rajaram, was born in 1650 and belonged to the family of Shivaji's mother. He had received his training under the renowned *Senapati* Prataprao Gujar. His considerable military abilities were frankly acknowledged by the Moghul generals who felt the weight of his arms on many a battlefield. Dhanaji was a cultured and farsighted soldier who knew the value of humility and moderation even in the midst of resounding victories. For some years, he actively co-operated with Santaji

Ghorpade in ensuring the security of the fugitive Rajaram and in inflicting crushing defeats on the enemy.

Santaji was cast in a different mould. He was a magnificent guerilla leader, with a genius for organizing large bodies of men and welding them into a mighty fighting force. He abhorred laxity and indiscipline and severely punished his men when such lapses were detected. There was no limit to his daring and resourcefulness. Nothing was impossible to this dashing general who proved his stature again and again by inflicting defeat and disgrace on many a renowned Moghul commander. Perhaps, the most memorable episode in his meteroic career was his attack on the camp of the Emperor at Koregaon. Taking a band of exceptionally courageous men with him, he entered the Imperial camp unnoticed in pouring rain and suddenly fell upon Aurangzeb's tent. The supporting ropes were cut and the massive edifice of canvas collapsed, with the aged Emperor, it was at first believed, falling with it. Fortunately for him, he had slept elsewhere the previous night. Santaji and his men stripped the tent of its valuables and carried them away, together with the massive gold cupolas that adorned it.

Santaji's audacity always paid him rich dividends. No Imperial General dared to face him. Sarkar, who observes that the Maratha captain's name "inspired abject fear in all ranks of the Moghul army," gives an example in support of his view. The source quoted by him says: "When the news reached that Santaji had arrived within a distance of sixteen or eighteen miles from him, Firuz Jang (Aurangzeb's highest general) lost colour in terror, and making a false announcement that he would ride to oppose him, appointed officers to clear the path, sent his tents in advance, but fled towards Bijapur by another route!"

More than any other individual leader, Santaji saved his master and his kingdom from destruction by his brilliant victories against the imperialists whose dreams he haunted by his prowess. His incredible successes galvanized the waning energies of his people, stimulated their declining morale, and thus braced them up to overcome any danger. Grant Duff rightly declares: "Santaji Ghorpade was one of the best officers of whom the Maratha annals can boast, and his eulogy is best recorded, when we say, he was the terror of the Moghul detachments for seven years."

Unfortunately, this great soldier was stricken with the malady of conceit. In his dealings with his colleagues and subordinates, he had the narrow outlook of a martinet. He made enemies of his most intimate friends and became increasingly insufferable by behaving as if he was a man of destiny. He overreached himself by withholding from his own sovereign courtesies and obedience due to his eminence. The end of such a man could not be peaceful. A brilliant career was suddenly cut short by the hand of an assassin. Santaji Ghorpade was the stormy petrel of Maratha history, but his role in stemming and repelling the tide of Moghul invasion will always be remembered with pride and gratitude.

The hopes of the aged Emperor, who had despaired of fulfilling his mission in the Deccan, were suddenly revived when Rajaram, worn out by cares and anxieties, died at Sinhgad in March 1700. But unfortunately for Aurangzeb, whose overstay in the world was resented as much by the people as by his sons, a lady came forward to frustrate his ambition. Tarabai, the widow of Rajaram, was a spirited woman who had learnt her lessons in patriotism and discipline in the stern school of adversity. She was brave and resourceful and was abundantly endowed with the gifts of leadership. She inspired her military officers to organize effective resistance to the invaders and often shared the suffering and weariness of the troops by living and moving with them. Great care was taken to ensure that the standard of the civil administration did not decline.

In brief, the widowed Queen assumed complete dominion over the life of the Marathas, holding them together and encouraging them to fight to the bitter end, and thus thoroughly exposed the hollowness of Aurangzeb's boast that after Rajaram's death Maharashtra would fall into the lap of the Moghuls like a ripe plum. Perhaps, the best tribute we can pay to this heroic woman is to recall the high praise that has been given to her by the hostile Muslim historian, Khafi Khan, who says that she was extremely wise and enterprising in the conduct of public affairs and popular with the army. In fact, she became so dearly loved and respected by her people that "all the efforts of Aurangzeb against the Marathas down to the end of his reign failed".

The inspiring leadership of Shivaji thus became a precious legacy which sustained the Maratha Empire through many vicissitudes even though the direction of its affairs sometimes fell into the hands of feeble men. Far away from his native province, his victories and wise administration stimulated a strong urge among the valiant people of the land, both during his lifetime and after his death, to establish a new order based on justice and tolerance. The Rajputs, the Sikhs, the Jats and the Bundelas, among others, strove mightily towards this end.

Raja Chhatrasal of Bundelkhand, who drew the sword against the excesses of Aurangzeb, cherished the ambition of serving in person under the banner of Shivaji. When the two leaders met in Maharashtra, the Maratha king persuaded the Bundela chief to return to his home province and provoke hostilities against. the imperialists from there, Chhatrasal, who went back to his people in 1671, fought for decades against the invaders and eventually succeeded in expelling them from his land. He died in December 1731, full of years and glory. Such heroic uprisings in the country marked the fulfilment of Shivaji's crusading mission on behalf of a new order based on religious harmony and political justice.

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CHAPTER 12

THE PATRIOT

SHIVAJI was not vouchsafed a long span of life and yet his achievements are monumental. There was, however, an imperative need for his masterful guidance for some more years in order to ensure the consolidation and expansion of the Maratha Kingdom. But when he knew that he would not be spared long, he faced death with complete resignation and fortitude, seeing that it was a necessary end. A man of deep piety, he spent several months in the company of Ramdas Swami, his spiritual guide, philosopher and friend, before death claimed him. Religious discussions, prayer and meditation brought peace and tranquillity to his troubled mind and braced him up to meet the distractions of his domestic life with composure.

Taking leave of Ramdas, whose ministrations had meant so much to him, he journeyed to Raigad on February 4, 1680, perhaps with the premonition that the two would never meet again. He busied himself in the capital with preparations for the wedding of his second son, Rajaram, who was married on March 15 to the daughter of Prataprao Gujar. A week later, he was laid up with fever from which he never recovered. The end came at midday on Saturday April 3, 1680. At the time of his death, he was fifty or fifty-three years old, according as we choose to accept the date of his birth as 1627 or 1630. A luminous star disappeared from the Indian firmament.

The last years of Shivaji were clouded with concern about the future of his realm. His eldest son, Sambhaji, was barely twentythree years old at the time of his death. The young man was undoubtedly a chip of the old block. He was handsome, sturdy, brave and generous. He fully inherited his father's enthusiasm for great and noble causes and valiantly donned Shivaji's armour and sword as the defender of the faith. He had the benefit of careful and liberal education. Men known for their learning and rectitude had undertaken the training of his mind and had found in him an intelligent, if wayward, student. He was carefully instructed in the significance of his parent's historic mission and was exhorted by no less a person than Ramdas Swami to qualify himself for taking Shivaji's place after him. Composing his counsel in verse, the Swami urged Sambhaji to weld his people into a strong and purposeful fraternity, animated by a lofty conception of their obligation to their *dharma* or religion and to their *rashtra* or country.

Despite his numerous pre-occupations, Shivaji missed no opportunity himself to enlighten the mind of his son and heir. At what proved to be their last meeting, the father made a moving appeal to his son to realize his exalted mission and act accordingly. He reminded Sambhaji that the essential quality of justice is impartiality and that discrimination in favour of the powerful and the so-called well-born would be gravely detrimental to the good name and efficiency of a government.

It was the duty of a ruler to listen not only to the great, but also to the humble, because he himself, Shivaji declared, had "often received better and sounder counsel" from the latter. Moreover, it was the work and the worth of a man and not his birth or wealth, that determined his real importance to the society. "What I should most recommend to you," Shivaji told Sambhaji, "is that in no case should you have a favourite if you are to spare your subjects from jealousy." He added that by strictly adhering to this principle a ruler could count on the support of all sections of his people in a period of real crisis.

In spite of the nobility of his character, Samhbaji was by temperament one who brooked no constraints on his behaviour, no matter how very salutary and desirable they were. This mettlesome young man grew up with a feeling of grievance. He had been brought up in an atmosphere of stern rectitude, not sufficiently softened with love and affection which only a mother could give. Unfortunately, his mother had died when he was still a boy. He appreciated his father's anxiety to give him the choicest training with the object of fitting him for his high office, but, in the exuberance of his youthfulness, he refused to accept discipline as a necessary adjunct to the realization of the goal. He was indeed the Prince Rupert of Maharashtra whose impetuosity often led him into grave difficulties and ended in his death under the most distressing circumstances.

It was this lack of balanced judgment that led him to escape from Panhala with his wife in December 1678 and rush into the arms of the Moghul commander, Dilir Khan, at Bahadurgad. Nor did he consider it wrong to strain the loyalty of such a veteran servant of his father as Phirangoji Narsala by attacking Bhupalgad. Only the Khan's excesses and his open contempt for the religious susceptibilities of Sambhaji served as an eye-opener to him and impelled him to return to the path of duty by stealing himself out of the Moghul camp in November 1679. After this date not many months remained for Shivaji to attempt the reformation of his son.

A recent biographer of Sambhaji has made a grievance of the candid appraisal of the infirmities in the character of his hero by contemporary and later historians. Much of his admiration for the high qualities of the courageous victim of Aurangzeb's religious wrath is justified, but it was necessary that the son and successor of Shivaji should not only be an Arthurian figure, but also a man of shrewd and sound judgment and of unlimited circumspection. This Sambhaji was not, as probably most others could not have been.

Many pen-portraits have been handed down to us about the personal appearance of Shivaji. He was of medium stature and his limbs were sturdy and of excellent proportion. He was of a fair complexion, with a long nose and beaming eyes. He weighed one hundred and forty pounds and, although he ate only one meal a day, was extraordinarily agile and active. His skill and courage became proverbial and his followers placed implicit confidence in his superior wisdom and generalship. "His life," wrote Orme, "was simple even to parsimony; his manners void of insolence or ostentation; as a sovereign most humane and solicitous for the well-being of his people.........

the same principles of frugality and expense were observed in the municipal disbursements of his government; far superior himself to magnificence, none of his officers were led to expect more than competence. In personal activity he exceeded all, of whom there is record. He met every emergency......... with instant discernment and unshaken fortitude......... Respected as the guardian of the nation he had founded, he moved everywhere amongst them with unsuspicious security and often alone." Barthelemy Carre noted that the Maratha King, besides being dreaded by his enemies, was regarded as one whose stars invariably led him to victory and glory.

Apart from these avowed admirers of Shivaji, even his most implacable foes and uncharitable critics were compelled to acknowledge his eminence. Grant Duff, whose judgment of men and things and more especially of the doings of the founder of the Maratha Empire, was warped when he wrote his famous *History,* felt constrained to extol Shivaji in these eloquent words: "We view his talents with admiration and his genius with wonder. For a popular leader, his frugality was a remarkable feature in his character; and the richest plunder never made him deviate from the rules he had laid down for its appropriation." The historian of the Marathas goes on to say: "Shivaji was patient and deliberate in his plans, ardent, resolute and persevering in their execution", and concludes by observing that the wisdom of the Maratha King's plans "raised the despised Hindus to sovereignty and brought about their own accomplishment when the hand that framed them was low in the dust".

Aurangzeb, whose iniquity, according to Grant Duff, was "almost unparalleled", whose "boundless ambition was concealed by deep dissimulation" and whose "boldness was equal to his hypocrisy", was frank enough to concede that he found in Shivaji a truly formidable foe. When the news of the Maratha King's death reached him, the Emperor declared: "He was a great captain and the only one who has had the magnanimity to raise a new kingdom. My armies have been employed against him for nineteen years and, nevertheless, his state has been always increasing."

No adversary of the Emperor, Muslim, Rajput, Sikh, Jat or Bundela, had caused him greater consternation than his Deccan enemy. In the course of his campaigns he reached a stage when it became impossible for him to choose a competent commander who could bring victory to the imperial arms against Shivaji. It has been recorded that in 1670 the revelation contained in a newsletter about the military successes of the Marathas struck Aurangzeb dumb. Asked which of his officers should next be sent against his Deccan enemy, Mahabat Khan replied with biting sarcasm and disdain: "No general is necessary. A decree from the Chief Kazi will destroy Shivaji!"

The Shah of Persia similarly served a bitter drench to the proud *Alamgir,* the "World Conqueror," to swallow by twitting him for his failure to subdue the son of a mere *sardar.* "I am coming to India with an army," he announced, "to teach you your business!" It was easy for the monarch of Iran to send out such distant and peripheral threats, but he would probably have met with no better fate than Aurangzeb had he ventured to tilt his sword at Shivaji.

In an earlier chapter we have discussed at length the abilities of Shivaji as a military leader and strategist. It was he, more than any other Hindu or Muslim commander, who forced the disciplined and heavily armed Moghul cavalry to flee before the charge of the lightly-equipped Maratha horse. His strength and activity on the battlefield, says a foreign military expert, "were the glory and admiration of his race". Justice Ranade writes with enthusiasm about the victorious generalship of Shivaji thus: "Throughout his career of thirty-four years, Shivaji did not on a single occasion suffer defeat where he led his armies in person, and even when his affairs were at the worst, he seemed to gather new courage and resource from the inspiration of the dangers around him." Such a categorical statement perhaps requires some modification, but there cannot be any doubt that the confidence created by Shivaji among the Marathas in their ability to meet the Moghuls on their own terms proved, to quote Ranade again, "the salvation of the country during the twenty-two years that Aurangzeb spent in the conquest of the Deccan".

Men liked to follow Shivaji and make any sacrifice for him, not merely because he was a successful fighter, but also because he was a benevolent ruler who strove sincerely to promote the progress and prosperity of his people. His readiness to recognize merit, no matter in whom it existed, and to reward it generously drew towards him a large band of brave, intelligent and resourceful men who stood steadfastly by his State long after his death.

Cosme da Guarda describes the devices employed by the King to ascertain the reactions of the people to his administration. Towards this end he moved freely among them, either alone or with a few companions, and, mixing with the crowds, deliberately spoke ill of himself and about other things concerning his government. He thus collected much useful information which he used for a more diligent and efficient fulfilment of his responsibilities. "He was", says this foreign observer, "naturally loved by all men of valour and good conduct." In contemporary India Shivaji's government was by far the most efficient and benevolent.

In religion, as in many other matters, Shivaji was far ahead of his times. His devotion to his ancestral faith was deep and unaffected. Besides being brought up by a pious mother and a religious-minded guardian, he lived in an age when saints and savants in Maharashtra preached the excellence of the simple beliefs and practices that flourished in ancient times. Tukaram, whose simple songs in praise of God have entered almost every Marathi-speaking home in the country, advised the King thus "There is one Truth in the world: There is one Soul in all Beings. Pin thy faith to This Soul, see thyself mirrored in Ramdas: Do this, O Prince, and thou and the whole world shall be blest therein; thy fame will pervade the Universe, saith Tuka."

Ramdas Swami was more explicit when he reminded Shivaji of his obligations to his religion and country. It was necessary, the Swami told him, to protect the faith of the land from insult and destruction and none could accomplish this task except he. "When the Faith is dead," announced the spirited preceptor, "death is better than life; why live when Religion has perished? Gather the Marathas together, make religion live again: our fathers laugh at us from Heaven!" The words *faith* and *religion* were used by the two saints to comprehend the entire way of life.

Apart from his natural inclination towards the concerns of the spirit, Shivaji was thus nurtured in traditions which imposed upon him the responsibility of reviving and defending the immemorial heritage of the land. He willingly undertook such a task and when he succeeded in clearing Maharashtra of the invaders, he liberally extended state patronage to learning and piety. The study of the Vedas and other sacred literature was revived. Learned men received generous benefactions so that they could pursue their studies and practise their devotions undistracted by the sordid material demands of the body. The fame of Shivaji as the patron of learning and scholarship reached many parts of India and men flocked to his court in search of recognition and reward. As the Marathi chroniclers have recorded, famous scholars were "assembled, honoured and rewarded". No man of learning had occasion to leave the hospitable realm of Shivaji.

Shivaji's enlightened policy, besides stimulating the study of Sanskrit, gave a great impetus to the revival of Marathi language and literature. Before his time, the prose literature in that language, especially on secular subjects, was negligible. Under his guidance a team of experts set out to enlarge and enrich its vocabulary by translating the technical terms from Persian. The result was the *Raj-Vyavahar Kosh* or the dictionary of technical terms for use in administration. Such pioneering labours paved the way for a rapid and many-sided development of Marathi literature which to-day is distinguished as much for its excellence as for its vastness.

Shivaji's veneration for other faiths was as profound as for his own. He showed the highest respect for the holy men of Islam and of Christianity. He looked upon Baba Yakut of

Kelsi as his honoured friend and benefactor, while a number of Muslim shrines received liberal endowments from his government. He showed similar respect and consideration to Father Ambrose when he met him at Surat. Like the temple and the *Gita,* the mosque and the *Holy Koran* won his greatest respect. During his military operations, he made it his invariable practice to give the *Koran* to a Muslim divine when the sacred book fell into his hands.

In this, as in many other respects, we are brought face to face with the most striking contrast between the attitude of Shivaji and that of Aurangzeb towards faiths other than their own. Perhaps, there cannot be a more decisive or heart-warming testimony to the catholicity and the tolerant outlook of the Maratha King than the fact that he specially built a mosque in front of his palace at Raigad so that his Muslim servants and subjects could offer their prayers according to the prescriptions of their own faith. In contrast, temple-destruction and desecration became an axiom of Aurangzeb's state policy.

Even Khafi Khan, whose patently hostile writings have provided the source material to many of the early British writers of Maratha history, has felt constrained to concede that whenever Shivaji and his army went on military expeditions they made it a point to cause "no harm to the mosques, the Book of God, or the women of any one. Whenever a copy of the sacred Koran came into his hands, he treated it with respect, and gave it to some of his Musalman followers. When the women of any Hindu or Muhammadan were taken prisoners by his men, and they had no friend to protect them, he watched over them" until they were restored to their relations. Such restrained behaviour on the part of a conqueror and such a high sense of virtue and morality are rare at all times. Shivaji's self-discipline and generosity towards his foes were a characteristic of his nature which, to quote justice Ranade, "stands out in marked contrast with the looseness and ferocity of those time".

Professor Basham, in his excellent book on ancient and medieval India, observes: "Shivaji, a brilliant leader, a just ruler, and a statesman of consummate craft, was a conservative in his outlook, and appeared to his contemporaries rather as a restorer of the old than as a builder of the new." This is certainly a valid observation, but Shivaji's mission was not to reform society but to save it. Had he functioned otherwise, he would have been guilty of pitying the plumage by forgetting the dying bird. It does not require the sword to mend the social infirmities of a community: that is essentially the task of the reformer and the preacher. There was no dearth of such men either in Maharashtra or in the rest of the country, both before and after the advent of Shivaji. It would, of course, be wrong to belittle or ignore their contribution to the Hindu revival, but without the political and military resurgence inaugurated by the Maratha ruler, the labours of these estimable men would not have been of much avail.

The character of Shivaji and his place in history should, therefore, be viewed from a much wider perspective. It is to gain such an intimate glimpse that the first chapter of the present book has been devoted to a description of the pinnacle of civilization to which the Hindus rose at one time and of the depth to which they fell. Subsequently the true measure of Shivaji's greatness is apt to elude us, if we fail to grasp how his heroic labours helped in raising them from their fallen condition. Nor would it be a correct appreciation of his career to judge him as if he was a missionary of non-violence. He drew the sword with the clear and well-defined object of promoting equitable conditions in the country. It was no part of his concern to abate or to allay the fear which his victorious armies raised in the minds of his powerful and treacherous enemies. Indeed, any kid-glove methods or half-measures in dealing with them would have been as futile as preaching calmness to a storm-tossed sea.

As has been shown in the preceding pages, the task that confronted Shivaji was of Himalayan proportions. Until his advent there was none to meet the country's crying need for combating the pusillanimity and the defeatism of the Hindus. The fact that they formed an overwhelming majority of the population, with vast stakes in their homeland, made no difference to their helplessness. They chose to crawl on their stomachs, while they should have stood up and fought for their legitimate rights and privileges. The Vijayanagar Empire certainly played a great part in reviving the morale of the Hindus, but, except on rare occasions, it was mostly on the defensive so that when it fell, defeatism and helplessness regained their hold over the Hindu mind.

The manhood of such a demoralized and disorganized people could be revived, not by mere exhortations, but by repeatedly proving both to them and to the ruling minority that the so-called invincibility of the latter's armed might was a mere make-believe. The obvious way of striving for a new order, based on a genuine Hindu-Muslim collaboration, was to qualify the majority community to play its part worthily and on terms of equality with its partner. Since at no time and in no part of the world are a dependent people treated with respect and honour, it was essential for the Hindus to shed the stigma of belonging to a defeated race. The means that were required for attaining this goal were not prayer and supplication, but unity and strength derived from the power of the sword. That power was given to them by Shivaji in full measure. In fact, we search in vain in the pages of history since the advent of the Muslims for another leader whose victories were so decisive and were fraught with such far-reaching and beneficent consequences as those of the great Maratha ruler.

Perhaps, the greatest tribute that can be rendered to Shivaji is that his achievements caused a complete change in the course of Indian history. Mountstuart Elphinstone, whose understanding of the Maratha affairs was first-hand and profound, points out that it required the genius of Shivaji to avail himself of the mistakes of Aurangzeb "by kindling a zeal for religion and, through that, a national spirit among the Marathas. It was by these feelings that his government was upheld after it passed into feeble hands, and was kept together, in spite of numerous internal disorders, until it had established its supremacy over the greater part of India". It was because Shivaji imparted such a powerful impulse to Maratha expansion that during the regime of Peshwa Balaji Bajirao, the power of the Marathas rose to its zenith. Under this Peshwa, "the Maratha cavalry, fully one hundred thousand strong, could truly boast that they had slaked their thirst in every stream that flowed between Cape Comorin and the Himalayas".

It is true that continental sovereignty eluded these spirited men in spite of their rise to such pre-eminence, but there cannot be any doubt that they would have maintained their ascendency in India if the European countries had not intervened. "India contains," wrote Metcalfe during the days of the East India Company's expansion, "no more than two great powers, British and Maratha, and every other state acknowledges the influence of one or the other. Every inch that we recede will be occupied by them." The failure of the Marathas to establish their paramountcy in the country may or may not be regretted at this distance of time, but it is undeniable that their original goal of ending a dispensation under which a handful of men could claim impunity for holding the country in fee was fully realized.

Thus, the success of the Marathas under Shivaji and his successors is not a mere episode in history, but an event of outstanding importance. Their achievements and of those that followed their example created a feeling throughout the country for the first time after many centuries that the Hindus could no longer be taken for granted. Better minds among both Hindus and Muslims began to wonder whether it would not be in the best interests of their communities and of the country as a whole that they should come together, sharing in full measure the joys and sorrows of belonging to a common motherland.

The readiness and the confidence with which Emperor Shah Alam came under the protection of the sagacious Maratha soldier-statesman, Mahadji Scindia, in preference to the tutelage of his own co-religionist, Ghulam Kadir, is a signal proof of the fact that the wind of change had begun to sweep the country. Again, it was the Maratha supremacy in arms that prompted another great Indian of the eighteenth century, Suraj Mal Jat, to propound the startling scheme for bringing the entire country within the frame of a single government through the combined administrative skill and military strength of the Hindus and the Muslims. The fact that the plan was still-born does not detract from the revolutionary significance of the conception.

New forces were at work to bring the two communities together and the degree of interdependence and mutual cordiality which they fostered would perhaps have surprised even Akbar. The establishment of British rule in the country gave a powerful stimulus to the new trend. There was complete impartiality on the part of the foreign rulers in treating Hindus and Muslims alike with contempt. With honourable exceptions, they functioned like J. B. Priestley's Big Englanders, "red-faced, loud-voiced fellows, wanting to go and boss everybody about all over the world". Their racial arrogance was only equal to their ignorance. Men like Clive, who mercilessly despoiled the country, spoke and behaved as if they were heaven-born. By Wellesley's time it became customary for the officials of the East India Company in Bengal to call certain parts of Calcutta a "Black Town" and to describe its dwellers as "dusky swarms". As years rolled on, religion became increasingly intolerant and dogmatic and racial pride more exclusive. "A certainty," write Edward Thompson and Garratt, "of immeasurable superiority settled on British minds. It was felt that Indians had no particular rights beyond that of accepting the government provided for them, without demur as to cost or kind."

It was not merely in social intercourse that the Indians were kept at arm's length; they were also rigorously excluded from all positions of trust and responsibility in the government of their own country. The reservation of higher offices in India for Englishmen was introduced by Lord Cornwallis who, besides being influenced by racial considerations, held a dim view of the abilities of Indians. The manifest absurdity of such prejudices did not prevent the British rulers from persisting in their misguided views about the people of this country. In the early years of the Company's territorial expansion many Indian officers commanded troops with European soldiers under them, but this "anomalous" position was soon rectified by cleansing the officer ranks in the army of the Indian element! The *sepoy* army that was maintained in India underlined the subordinate status and the helpless condition of her inhabitants.

The first widespread protest of the principal communities against their confinement, in the words of Sir Thomas Munro, to a mere "animal state of thriving in peace" was made in 1857. It was a tremendous uprising in which both Hindus and Muslims participated, but it was not decisive enough to bring about the deposition of the British from their paramount position. Part of the reason for its failure has been explained by Maulana Azad who says: "As I read about the events of 1857, I am forced to the sad conclusion that Indian national character had sunk very low. The leaders of the revolt could never agree. They were mutually jealous and continually intriguing against one another." But to discerning men the rebellion, despite its failure, gave unmistakable proofs of the formidable omens under which the country was destined to march towards its goal.

The Hindus and the Muslims were thus bound together by their common suffering and by the genuineness of their grievances. A great opportunity for building up a secular and democratic order in continental India through the united labours of her principal communities was, however, lost because the Muslims increasingly pursued a separatist policy. The myth—and it was none else, as the pages of this book abundantly bear out—that the Muslims had held the sovereignty of India before the advent of the British, was invented and sedulously fostered in order to disrupt Hindu-Muslim relations. The Aga Khan's deputation of 1906 to the Viceroy was one of the most unfortunate events in Indian history and was naturally hailed by the imperialists and their handymen as epoch-making. Lady Minto, who recorded her glee over the happening in her diary, received an exultant letter from a correspondent in which it was claimed that the episode was "nothing less than the pulling back of sixty-two millions of people from joining the ranks of the seditious opposition". No less a person than the Aga Khan has claimed in his *Memoirs* that concessions to the separatist demands of his community inevitably led to India's partition and the creation of Pakistan.

Pakistan is thus ths fulfilment of a wild dream. The Hindus could not avert the country's partition, partly because of their weakness and disunity and largely because the major political party, the Indian National Congress, was pledged to fight, not communalism, but the British rule. Now that a new Muslim State has come into existence, although some of its territories constitute the cradle of the ancient Hindu civilization, all fair-minded persons sincerely wish it God speed. But have the problems which made its birth possible ceased to plague the partitioned India? If they have not, does not the life of Shivaji offer us a lesson in solving them? Indeed, no study of great men can be rewarding unless it helps us to understand our present problems and to avoid their recurrence in the future.

Speaking at Poona in June 1961, while unveiling the portrait of Shivaji, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, then President of the Indian Republic called attention to the problems of unity that confronted the country and pleaded with the people to "realize our duty to place India and her interests above everything else". They could, he said, develop such a broad outlook by studying the life of Shivaji and following his example in patriotism. "Once again," the President observed, "history has brought India to the cross-roads. We must turn to the right path. If, Heaven forbid, we commit any mistake at this critical, juncture, all our hopes may be belied, our aspirations frustrated and our national unity endangered." To avert such a calamity and to strengthen the forces of unity in the country, it was, he said, necessary that we should assimilate the ideas and ideals propagated and practised by Shivaji. The supreme elements in the Maratha King's character were, Dr. Rajendra Prasad declared, "a high personal character, religious tolerance and a burning patriotism".

By virtue of its position and numbers the majority community has an inescapable obligation to set an example in unity and patriotism to the rest of the population. If it gives such a lead, it will have worthily assimilated the message of Shivaji. His life has shown how through unity, strength and patriotism, it was possible for an infant power to supplant a mighty empire resting on iniquity and intolerance. His crusade, as we saw, was not against any individual or community, but against a system which unjustly and arbitrarily denied the people their basic rights and privileges.

Shivaji employed tolerance to supplant bigotry and enlightened government to end tyranny. In striving towards this goal he accepted the services of all these who shared his enthusiasm and satisfied his rigorous tests, no matter to what class or community they belonged. He put a Muslim in charge of his navy to fight the Moghuls and the Sultans of Bijapur, without doubting his subordinate's loyalty or integrity for a moment. Supremely conscious of his own strength and the justice of his cause, he disdained to entertain such ignoble thoughts in his mind.

In perpetuating the memory of this illustrious son of India, whose outstanding contribution consists in practising the triple virtues of unity, strength and patriotism, let us recall Burke's famous inscription on Chatham's tomb. "The means by which Providence raises a nation to greatness are the virtues infused into great men." Writers of biographies often overwhelm their heroes with superlative praise. Charles XII, King of Sweden (1697-1718), is one such hero who has received more than his measure of adulation. This extraordinary monarch has been described by Voltaire as "the only person in history who was free from all weakness", while Dr. Johnson has compared him with Hannibal. Even Peter the Great, that untamed genius who defeated Charles, declared that the Swedish ruler was "the most perfect man and hero since the world began". We need not lavish such flattery on Shivaji, for his eminence, being both towering and massive, can dispense with all exaggerations. A man who was the true incarnation of courage, generosity and statesmanship, could easily do without such flummeries.

Maharashtra cherishes Shivaji's memory with profound respect and affection. His name is enshrined in the hearts of millions of her people who remember and revere it in many ways. That shrewd political strategist, Lokmanya Tilak, elevated the life-story of the Maratha King into a popular movement.

Through the columns of his Marathi weekly, *Kesari (Lion),* Tilak wrote stirring articles, freely invoking the name of Shivaji, to rouse the dormant energies of his people and to brace them up for purposeful action. In the farflung theatres of the First and the Second World War, his name was heard as a way-cry wherever the Maratha troops fought under the banner of the Allied Powers. The British, who were so meticulous about their prestige and protocol when dealing with Indians, brushed aside both when the Prince of Wales, now the Duke of Windsor, laid the foundation stone of the All-India Shivaji Memorial at Poona during his tour of the country in 1921.

Dr. Rajendra Prasad has described Shivaji as "the builder of an epoch in our history". There cannot be a more appropriate tribute to the Maratha hero than this. Perhaps, we can best perpetuate the memory of this remarkable man by giving wider currency to the ideals of tolerance and magnanimity, both derived from a position of strength, for which he lived and laboured. Let us end this book with our appreciation of this great patriot and national leader in the words of Ramdas Swami:

> "Remember Shivaji! And count this life as grass.
> In this world and the next, rely on fame alone.
> Remember Shivaji! His form, his noble aims.
> Forget not also all his valiant deeds on earth."

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NOTE ON THE BOOK

The present work on Shivaji, the great Maratha hero, does not seek to unearth any new facts, but it strike out a new path and attempts to prove that the advent of Shivaji gave a new and significant turn to Indian history. In fact, its central aim is to present him, not only as a man of great personal rectitude, of broad humanity and of penetrating perception but as an outstanding national leader. In trying to estimate the true greatness of Shivaji, the author asks what the fate and the future of India would have been if he had not been born and fulfilled his mission.

It is not important to find out whether Shivaji or the Peshwas could foresee that their actions would lead to a closer understanding between the principal communities of India, but that is how history took its course.

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